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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Beware of Tax Scammers Ahead of Extended Filing Deadline



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—This week marks the previous tax-filing deadline, but the date to file is being pushed back and Attorney General Ashley Moody wants to make sure Floridians avoid tax-filing scams during this new, longer tax period. Attorney General Moody is issuing a Consumer Alert to warn about tax scams and identity theft ahead of the new filing deadline. The U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service announced in March an extension of the 2021 tax-filing deadline due to the impact of COVID-19. The new deadline to submit taxes to the IRS this year is May 17.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “COVID-19 has disrupted so much of our daily lives, including how we prepare and when we file our taxes. While the extension of the tax-filing deadline gives Floridians more time to organize and complete their filings, it also gives scammers more days to try to steal personal and sensitive taxpayer information. I urge Floridians to maintain extreme caution when preparing and filing taxes this year.”

In February, Attorney General Moody released a new resource: *Scams at a Glance: Tax Identity Theft*, designed to help taxpayers avoid identity thieves attempting to gain access to personal information through tax-filing schemes.

Helpful tips from this resource include:

- File tax returns as soon as possible to prevent a scammer from fraudulently filing first;
- Hang up if someone calls asking for personal information or requests payment. Verify the caller's legal authority or business affiliation by locating the entity's phone number on an official website;
- Use a secure internet connection if filing online or mail returns directly from the post office; and
- Research tax preparers thoroughly before handing over personal information.

More tax identity theft tips can be found in the *Scams at a Glance: Tax Identity Theft* brochure here. To view the brochure in Spanish, click here.

Scams at a Glance: IRS Imposters is another resource Floridians can use to ward off potential scammers, particularly around tax season, when IRS scams typically rise. IRS scams usually involve a call or email in which the imposter claims to be calling or writing from an official source and that urgent action—usually payment—is required by the recipient.

Protect yourself from falling victim to IRS imposter scams by following the tips below:

- Do not automatically trust the number listed on caller ID. A method called spoofing allows scammers to disguise phone numbers to make it appear as if the IRS or another trusted agency is calling;
- Know that the IRS will only initiate contact by mail. The IRS will also allow taxpayers to question or appeal the amount owed, and will never demand immediate payment without allowing the taxpayer time to substantiate the amount owed; and
- Be aware that the IRS will not demand to be paid immediately using a specific payment method, such as wire transfer, credit card, prepaid debit card or gift cards.

To view the *Scams at a Glance: IRS Imposters* in English, click here.

To view the *Scams at a Glance: IRS Imposters* in Spanish, click here.

If anyone receives a suspicious call from someone claiming to be from the IRS, report the call to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration by filing a complaint online at TIGTA.gov or by calling 1(800) 366-4484.

Anyone who encounters tax identity theft or other tax-related scams should contact the Florida Attorney General's Office by visiting MyFloridaLegal.com or calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams, or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to notify Floridians about scams and available refunds in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.