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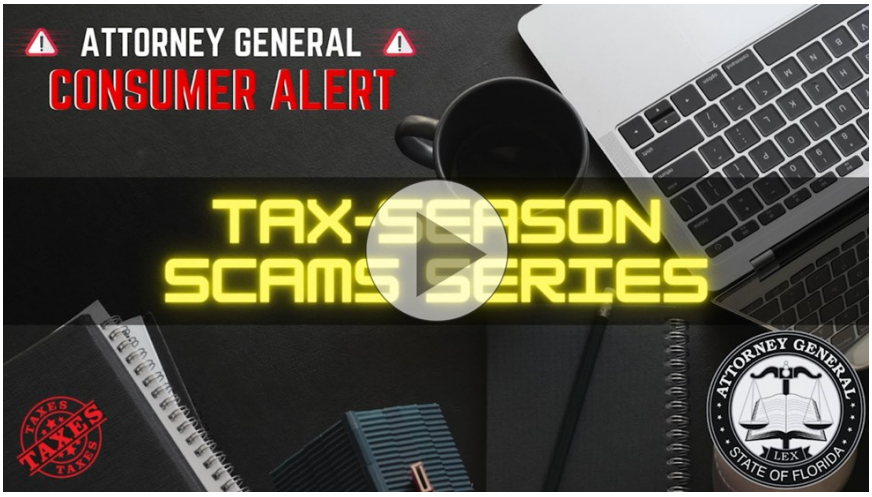
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Launches Series to Protect Taxpayers



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today launched the 2023 Tax-Season Scams Series during National Consumer Protection Week. The first alert in the series warns about fraudulent tax preparers. The Internal Revenue Service reported a 300% increase in reports of suspicious activity from 2021 to 2022. With Floridians preparing this year's returns, Attorney General Moody is issuing tips to avoid falling victim to fraudsters.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “As many Floridians prepare their tax returns ahead of the April 18th deadline, it is important to be aware of possible scams. I’m launching our 2023 Tax-Season Scams Series with a warning about fraudulent tax preparers to help Floridians choose a trusted professional and avoid common pitfalls. This series will cover some of the main tax-related schemes and help teach Floridians how to avoid falling victim.”

Cases of fraudsters creating false returns show the extent some will go to to steal from taxpayers. In March 2022, the United States Department of Justice sentenced two tax preparers in Florida to prison sentences after the duo fraudulently claimed nearly $3 million in refunds. In October 2021, a Florida tax preparer opened up bank accounts in clients’ names without the clients knowing and filed more than 700 returns, collecting $235,000.

Attorney General Moody is issuing the following tips to help Floridians avoid fraudulent tax preparers:

- Ask for a preparer’s IRS Tax Identification number;

- Check the company's history and ensure the preparer holds all the correct qualifications using the IRS directory;
- Never sign a blank or incomplete return;
- Double-check for hidden service fees in a contract before signing;
- Know that if a preparer does not offer e-filing, it is a large red flag. Preparers doing taxes for more than 10 clients generally must file electronically; and
- Keep tax records and proof of receipt in a safe place, just in case.

If a fraudulent tax preparer is suspected, report the activity using the IRS Form 14157, Tax Return Preparer, or call 1(800) 829-3676. Additionally, fraud should be reported to the victim's bank and any other financial institutions.

The IRS released online tools to help track tax refunds. You can use the 'Where's My Refund?' webtool or download the IRS2Go mobile app to check the status of a refund.

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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.