

IRS



News Release

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IRS URGES YOU TO CHOOSE A TAX RETURN PREPARER WISELY

As the 2014 tax season begins IRS caution taxpayers who pay someone to do their taxes to choose a preparer wisely. "If you choose to use a paid tax preparer, it is important that you find a qualified tax professional. **Taxpayers are ultimately responsible for everything on their return even when it's prepared by someone else,**" said IRS Spokesman Mark S. Green. All tax professionals preparing returns for a fee must have a Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN). "We strongly recommend you select someone who is **creditable, knowledgeable, accountable, and has a PTIN.**" said Green.

During the 2014 filing season, IRS representatives will visit tax return preparers to discuss their responsibilities as a return preparer and to verify their compliance with existing returns and e-file requirements. This is the agency's fourth year of a hands-on effort to improve the accuracy and quality of filed tax returns and to heighten awareness of preparer responsibilities.

Most tax return preparers are professional, honest and provide excellent service to their clients; you can use the following tips to choose a preparer who will offer the best service for their tax preparation needs.

- Reputable preparers will ask multiple questions to determine whether expenses, deductions and other items qualify and remind clients that they need to keep careful and complete records in order to substantiate information on their tax return. By doing so, they have your best interest in mind and are trying to help you avoid penalties, interest, or additional taxes that could result from later IRS contacts.
- Find out what the service fees are before the return is prepared. Avoid preparers who base their fee on a percentage of the amount of your refund or who claim they can obtain larger refunds than other preparers.
- Only use a tax professional that signs your tax return, includes his or her preparer tax identification number (PTIN) and provides you with a copy for your records.
- Avoid tax preparers that ask you to sign a blank tax form -- **Never sign a blank tax return!**
- Choose a tax preparer that will be around to answer questions after the return has been filed.
- Ask questions. Do you know anyone who has used the tax professional? Were they satisfied with the service they received?
- Check to see if the preparer has any questionable history with the Better Business Bureau, the state's board of accountancy for CPAs or the state's bar association for attorneys. Find out if the preparer belongs to a professional organization that requires its members to pursue continuing education and also holds them accountable to a code of ethics.
- Determine if the preparer's credentials meet your needs. Does your state have licensing or registration requirements for paid preparers? Is he or she an Enrolled Agent, Certified Public Accountant, or Attorney? If so, the preparer can represent taxpayers before the IRS on all matters – including audits, collections, and appeals. Other return preparers can represent taxpayers only in audits regarding a return signed as a preparer.
- **Before you sign your tax return, review the entire return and ask questions.**

You can report abusive tax preparers to the IRS on Form 14157, Complaint: Tax Return Preparer or by sending a letter to: Internal Revenue Service, Fresno, CA 93888. Download Form 14157 and fill it out or order by mail at 800-TAX FORM (800-829-3676).