



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wolf Administration provides tips to avoid tax scams

Department of Revenue joins with the IRS & Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants to offer guidance for taxpayers

Harrisburg, Pa. — With about a month remaining before the April 15 deadline to file state and federal tax returns, the Department of Revenue today partnered with the IRS and the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants to offer useful filing tips and other guidance to help Pennsylvanians avoid falling victim to common tax scams.

“Last year we saw approximately 2.7 million taxpayers file their Pennsylvania tax returns in the final month before the filing deadline,” said Revenue Secretary Dan Hassell, whose department annually processes more than 6 million personal income tax returns. “This is a good time for us to remind the public that filing now through our free online system can help prevent cybercriminals from stealing your personal information and filing a fraudulent tax return in your name.”

Speaking at a news conference today at the Capitol Media Center, Hassell encouraged taxpayers to visit the Department of Revenue’s [Padirectfile](#), a free, secure, state-only electronic income tax filing system. Taxpayers can also find information on ways to electronically file state and federal returns for free through a reputable vendor on the [department's site](#) (income limits may apply).

Warnings on ‘Tax Processing Center’ scam and ‘Dirty Dozen’ tax scams

Hassell also took time today to provide an overview of prevalent tax scams, including one that involves phony “Final Demand For Payment” notices that have been mailed to many taxpayers. The notices from the “Tax Processing Center” threaten the seizure of a taxpayer’s property if the recipient of the notice fails to make immediate payment to the “State of Pennsylvania.” The notices also provide an 800-number to call to “avoid enforcement.”

This is a classic scam that uses pressure tactics and fear to motivate the recipient into taking immediate action. Criminals may also access public records so they can include taxpayer-specific information on the notices to make them appear legitimate.

IRS Senior Stakeholder Liaison Richard Furlong Jr. discussed the IRS’ [“Dirty Dozen” tax scams](#), an annual list of common scams that peak during the filing season as people prepare their tax

returns. These involve phishing schemes, phone scams, identity theft ploys and refund fraud committed by dishonest tax preparers.

“Taxpayers should constantly be on guard against these scams,” Furlong said. “We know from experience that fraudsters will pose as officials from the IRS and threaten honest taxpayers to try to get ahold of their money and sensitive data. You can never be too cautious.”

The IRS also encourages taxpayers to check out the [IRS Services Guide](#), which provides an overview of the many IRS.gov tools available to taxpayers and tax professionals. For fast answers to general tax questions, taxpayers can search the [Interactive Tax Assistant](#), [Tax Topics](#), [Frequently Asked Questions](#), [Tax Trails](#) and [IRS Tax Map](#).

How to avoid common tax filing mistakes

Jason Skrinak, CPA, State & Local Tax Practice Leader with RKL LLP and a member of the PICPA, encouraged taxpayers to avoid common tax-filing mistakes by setting aside plenty of time to file state and federal returns. This allows taxpayers to verify their returns are correct before they are submitted.

Skrinak also encouraged Pennsylvanians to use the tax season as an opportunity to take a closer look at the security safeguards they have in place to protect their data and sensitive personal information. As an organization with more than 22,000 members, the PICPA routinely hears firsthand accounts of data breaches and cases of identity theft.

“This is a great time to change your passwords and take a closer look at the security precautions you’re using to protect yourself online,” Skrinak said. “If you’re working with a tax preparer, you should also make sure the preparer has the right securities in place to protect your personal information.”

For more information on ways to protect yourself, visit the Department of Revenue's [Identity Theft Victim Assistance](#) webpage. You can also find further information about protecting yourself online at [PA.gov/Cybersecurity](#).

The Department of Revenue also encourages Pennsylvanians to take a look at other information on scams and refund anticipation loans that will help taxpayers as they file their returns:

- **Read more:** [Department of Revenue Warns of Common Scams with Tax Season Underway](#)
- **Read more:** [Department of Revenue Urges Caution with Tax Refund Anticipation Loans](#)

Note: Video and audio from the event will be available for download later today in an email from the Pennsylvania Internet News Service (PINS). Register for PINS emails through cms@pacast.com.

