

April 13, 2022

*****CONSUMER ALERT*****

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL ISSUES TIPS FOR AVOIDING TAX IDENTITY THEFT

Chicago — As the income tax filing deadline quickly approaches, Attorney General Kwame Raoul today issued guidance to help Illinois residents safely file tax returns and urged people to exercise caution before providing personally identifying and financial information online.

"In our ever-increasing digital world, it is more important than ever to be cautious when sharing personal identifying information," Raoul said. "Unfortunately, bad actors stand ready to take advantage of consumers during tax season. The best way to prevent fraud from taking place is to protect your personal information. I am encouraging people to access free resources to help them make informed choices as we approach the tax filing deadline."

Monday, April 18 is the last day most taxpayers can file their income taxes, and Attorney General Raoul is reminding people to be on the lookout for scam tax preparers and to thoroughly review documents before signing them, including those that require electronic signatures. Raoul encourages consumers who need a tax preparer to seek assistance from reputable sources such as the [Taxpayer Advocate Service provided by the Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#). Additionally, the IRS offers access to free tax filing services to qualified consumers. Raoul encourages consumers to check tax preparers' qualifications and browse the [IRS Free File Online Lookup Tool](#).

The Attorney General is reminding people to review documents, including those that require electronic signatures, as scam tax preparers can use e-signatures to attempt to deceptively sign tax documents, consents, or to justify charges for expensive unnecessary services and high fees. Raoul encourages people to ask questions if they do not understand something, and go elsewhere for assistance with filing if the tax preparer will not or cannot provide an answer.

Attorney General Raoul is also warning individuals to protect their personal information, as scammers can steal that information and use it to file tax returns early and even receive any tax refunds owed to the consumer. Victims, especially those who do not file their taxes regularly, sometimes do not realize they have been scammed until they receive a written notice from the IRS informing them a duplicate return has been filed. People should immediately contact the IRS if they receive any IRS notices that do not apply to them.

Raoul offered tips to help consumers avoid becoming a victim of tax identity theft:

- Protect your Social Security number (SSN). Don't give out your SSN unless there is a good reason for doing so, and only if you know to whom you are providing it.
- Do your research before selecting a tax preparer. Make sure you are using a reputable tax preparer before handing over your personal information. [People can search online](#) for free, in-person tax preparation assistance.
- Apply for and use an Identity Protection PIN. This six-digit number confirms your identity and prevents someone else from filing a tax return using your Social Security number. Once you receive your PIN, you must provide it each year when you file your federal tax returns. [Visit IRS.gov](#) for more information.
- Report any suspicious or threatening IRS mail, phone, email or social media correspondence to the Treasury Inspector General for [Tax Administration online](#) or by calling 800-366-4484. Suspected IRS phone scams can also be reported by visiting the [Federal Trade Commission's website](#) and listing "IRS Telephone Scam" in the notes.

- Report unsolicited email claiming to be from the IRS, or an IRS-related service like the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System, to the IRS by emailing phishing@irs.gov.
- Contact the Attorney General's Identity Theft Unit by calling 866-999-5630.

According to the IRS, tax professionals who engage in remote transactions have been especially vulnerable to identity thieves posing as potential clients who send an attachment that they claimed included their tax information. Once the tax preparer clicks on the URL or opens the attachment, malware secretly downloads onto their computers, giving thieves access to passwords to client accounts or remote access to the computers themselves. Tax professionals have a responsibility to protect taxpayer data by securing their network, and Raoul urges tax professionals to learn how to safeguard that data by [reviewing IRS guidance](#).

Individuals who need to report a complaint involving a tax preparer or tax refund anticipation product should visit the Attorney General's website or call the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud hotlines:

1-800-386-5438 (Chicago)
1-800-243-0618 (Springfield)
1-800-243-0607 (Carbondale)