

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
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## **Attorney General Racine Cautions District Residents on ‘Six Scams to Avoid’ during Tax Season**

*As IRS and District Income Tax Filing Deadlines Approach, AG Shares Tips with Residents*

**WASHINGTON, D. C.** – With deadlines for filing District and federal income taxes approaching, Attorney General Karl A. Racine today cautioned District residents to be on the lookout for scams common during tax season. In particular, he singled out “Six Scams to Avoid” – fraudulent schemes that consumer-protection experts in the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) note often crop up during tax-filing season.

“Scam artists are seeking to defraud District residents of their hard-earned dollars all year long – but there are some scams that crop up more frequently during tax season,” Attorney General Racine said. “A key part of my responsibility is to educate and protect District consumers, so I ask them to take note of these schemes. If you believe you have been a victim of any of these, I urge you to call our Consumer Protection Hotline at (202) 442-9828 or send an e-mail to [consumer.protection@dc.gov](mailto:consumer.protection@dc.gov).”

### **Attorney General Racine’s “Six Scams to Avoid” for the 2015 Tax Season**

- 1. Phone Scams:** Taxpayers may receive telephone calls – which can often be aggressive in tone and contain threats – from criminals posing as Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agents. The IRS reports a surge of these kinds of scams in recent months. These callers can threaten arrest, deportation, the revocation of licenses, and other negative consequences as a result of federal taxes owed. In the vast majority of cases, the IRS will first contact those who owe taxes via mail, and legitimate IRS callers will not demand immediate payment or ask for credit-card or debit-card numbers over the phone. If you think you owe federal taxes, call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 to confirm. For more information, [visit the IRS website here](#).
- 2. Phishing:** Phishing is the practice of disguising fake e-mails or setting up fake websites as legitimate ones in an effort to steal personal information. The IRS generally does not first make contact with taxpayers through e-mails, text messages or social-media outlets. Consumers should not click on any links in electronic messages claiming to be from the IRS if the message arrived without warning. If you

receive a suspicious e-mail or other electronic message claiming to be from the IRS, report it to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov). For more information, [visit the IRS website here](#).

3. **Identity Theft:** Taxpayers should always be vigilant about identity theft, but particularly during tax season. Criminals sometimes file fraudulent returns using someone else's Social Security number in order to claim their refunds. The IRS reports that, from 2011 through October 2014, it has stopped 19 million suspicious returns and protected consumers from more than \$63 billion in fraudulent refunds. For more information, [visit the IRS website here](#).
4. **Return Preparer Fraud:** While the vast majority of tax professionals provide honest tax-preparation services, some dishonest preparers set up shop during tax-filing season to perpetrate refund fraud – including identity theft and other scams that defraud taxpayers. Return preparers are a vital part of the U.S. tax system. Legitimate preparers of federal returns should have an IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN). Anyone with a valid 2015 PTIN is authorized to prepare federal tax returns. For more tips and information on avoiding this kind of tax-season fraud, [visit the IRS website here](#).
5. **Inflated Refund Claims:** Taxpayers should be wary of any tax preparer who promises outlandishly large refunds. Taxpayers should also avoid any preparer who asks them to sign a blank return, promises a large refund before examining their tax records, or who charges fees based on a percentage of the refund. These kinds of scam artists often attract victims using flyers, advertisements, phony storefronts, and word-of-mouth via community and religious groups. For more information on avoiding this scam, [visit the IRS website here](#).
6. **Fake Charities:** Taxpayers should always be vigilant to avoid organizations masquerading as legitimate charities to attract donations from unsuspecting contributors, but particularly during tax season. Claiming donations to illegitimate charities on a tax refund can lead to serious negative consequences for taxpayers. Before donating to a charity that's new to you, take a few extra minutes to check whether your donation will be tax deductible. Be wary of charities with names very similar to well-known national organizations; some fake charities use names or websites that intentionally imitate those of legitimate groups. A search feature on the IRS website, Exempt Organizations [Select Check](#), allows people to find legitimate, qualified charities to which donations may be tax-deductible. For more information on avoiding this scam, [visit the IRS website here](#).

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