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ATTORNEY GENERAL KROGER WARNS OF TAX PREPARER SCAMS

Paying taxes can be painful, but falling victim to a fraudulent tax preparer is worse. As tax season approaches, Oregon Attorney General John Kroger is urging taxpayers to watch out for fraudulent tax preparers. Every year, scammers prey on unsuspecting Oregon taxpayers, stealing their refunds and leaving them with significant tax liabilities. The scammers also inflate expenses and claim false deductions and unallowable credits. Oregon is the only state that regulates tax professionals through competency and ethics standards. Anyone who prepares personal income tax returns for compensation in Oregon must be licensed by the Board of Tax Practitioners.

Last year, the Oregon Department of Justice and the Board of Tax Practitioners teamed up to stop an unlicensed tax preparer that violated the law 534 times. Attorney General Kroger and the Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners offer the following tips when choosing an income-tax preparer:

- Check to ensure the preparer is licensed at: <http://www.oregon.gov/cgi-bin/tax.cgi>.
- Never give out personal information such as your Social Security number, bank account or mortgage receipt to a tax preparer unless you have determined they are licensed.
- Be wary of tax preparers who claim they can obtain larger than normal refunds than others.
- Avoid preparers who base their fee on a percentage of your refund.

Tax evasion is a federal felony, punishable by five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. If you or someone you know has fallen victim to a tax preparer scam, contact the Oregon Department of Justice Consumer Hotline at 1-877-877-9392 or the Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners at 503-378-4034.