

INCOME TAX SEASON:

Choose your Tax Return Preparer Wisely

THE IRS WARNS TAXPAYERS SHOULD BEWARE OF GHOST TAX PREPARERS

Ghost Preparers...

- ✘ May require payment in cash only and may not provide a receipt or even Form 1040
- ✘ Invent income to qualify their clients for tax credits
- ✘ Claim fake deductions to boost the size of the refund
- ✘ Direct refunds into unknown accounts (not the taxpayer's account)
- ✘ Charge fees based on the size of a refund

- By law, anyone who is paid to prepare or assists in preparing federal tax returns must have a valid **Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN)**.
- The **IRS Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications** (<https://irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf>) can help identify many preparers by type of credential or qualification.
- No matter who prepares their return, taxpayers should review it carefully and **ask questions** about anything that's not clear **before signing**. They should **verify their routing and bank account number** on the completed tax return for any direct deposit refund (<https://www.irs.gov/refunds/get-your-refund-faster-tell-irs-to-direct-deposit-your-refund-to-one-two-or-three-accounts>) refund. Taxpayers should watch out for ghost preparers putting their bank account information on the returns.
- **If you have been GHOSTED, report preparer misconduct** using IRS Form 14157, Return Preparer Complaint (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f14157.pdf>).
- If a taxpayer suspects a preparer filed or changed their tax return without their consent, they should file Form 14157-A (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f14157a.pdf>), **Tax Return Preparer Fraud or Misconduct Affidavit**.