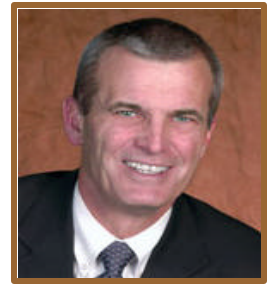


CONSUMER ALERT!

From the Office of Jefferson/Gilpin Counties
District Attorney Scott Storey



Tax Season Is Stressful; Don't Add Victimization to the Mix

I love it when Daylight Savings Time rolls around again. Baseball season? Can't wait! I welcome the beginning of summer. Tax time? I'd rather schedule an appointment with the dentist. Make me walk across burning coals. Force me to take a bus to my next vacation destination.

I am appreciative of the services and opportunities supported by my tax dollar. We live in a great country. But the process of figuring my taxes and making sure new laws are heeded is stressful.

Tax returns include Social Security numbers and if a refund is going to be automatically deposited, the return will also contain your routing and bank account number. This is information ID thieves can readily use.

A big caution for all of us is to be careful with our tax information. Find a place to secure your tax information at home when you're not working on your taxes. Don't carry completed tax forms or information in your car; this information can be stolen at a gas station, restaurant, or any other place you park your car—even if for a short time. Don't take your tax information to work and leave it lying out.

Here are more tax time safety tips:

- When your taxes are finished, do not place the envelope in your curbside mailbox or a convenient blue postal box; here it can be stolen. Take it to the Post Office and deposit it inside;
- Even though the Internal Revenue Service makes the suggestion to write your Social Security number on your check, it is not a legal requirement to do so. I suggest you leave it off;
- Ask any tax preparation service you use, how they will file or dispose of your information when they are finished. Make sure it is discarded in a safe manner, such as shredding, or stored in a locked room;

- When you take your completed tax forms to be copied, at Kinkos, the supermarket or work, make sure you do not leave any forms behind;
- If you use a computer program, such as TurboTax, to complete your taxes, turn your computer off when not in use to avoid being hacked. Better yet, use TurboTax on an old computer not connected to the Internet;
- Have any refund 'Direct deposited' so that a refund check does not sit in your curbside mailbox; it can be stolen, altered/washed and cashed using a fake ID;
- Do not respond to a phone call or E-mail claiming to be from the Internal Revenue Service concerning clarification about your tax information or offering help securing a 'Stimulus Payment.' This is 'Phishing.' The IRS will not contact you by phone or E-mail for any personal information they might need;
- When seeking information, make sure you contact genuine sources. The Website for the Internal Revenue Service is www.irs.gov. If you go to www.irs.com, you will automatically be taken to a commercial Website called www.banks.com/taxes. This Website clearly states: "This is not the Internal Revenue Service; It's your #1 independent tax resource.";
- The Internal Revenue Service warns taxpayers to be wary of scams and promises claiming to help you avoid paying taxes; these fall under the 'too good to be true' category;
- Government sponsored assistance is available:

The IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers free tax help to people who earn less than \$42,000 per year;

The Tax Consulting for the Elderly (TCE) Program offers free tax assistance for those 60 years of age and older;

AARP offers the Tax Aide program. Call 1-888-227-7669 for the nearest site;

Information about the IRS is available in Spanish at www.irs.gov/espanol or 1-800-829-1040 Extension 8.

Check out all offers of 'Free' assistance carefully.

**For questions, assistance, or to schedule
a "Power Against Fraud" seminar, call:
303-271-6980**

