

# Comptroller Susana Mendoza Issues Warning About Tax Related Scams

January 29 2024 10:20 AM



CHICAGO - Tax season can be fraught with paperwork, deadlines, and sometimes con artists. As the first day for filing kicks off, it's important to be cautious.

“Just like throughout the year, you should take precautions to safeguard your personal information when it comes to tax documents,” says Comptroller Mendoza. “Scammers often use scare tactics to try and get taxpayers to hand over private information and money.”

Several current scams aim to look like official communication from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). They include:

- Receiving a cardboard envelope in the mail with a note on IRS letterhead, stating “about your unclaimed refund.” The letter will likely include contact information and a phone number that does not belong to the IRS, and request you provide sketchy “filing” information such as a photo of your driver’s license, Social Security number, and other personal information. The IRS says the letter may be poorly worded and include different fonts.
- IRS telephone scams, where impersonators commonly target recent immigrants and those with limited English proficiency. The con artist will call and threaten arrest or deportation if payment is not made in the form of a gift card or wire transfer. If you truly owe money, the IRS will first mail you a bill.
- False claims for unemployment compensation. The IRS urges taxpayers to be on the lookout for criminals seeking to steal their identities to file fraudulent claims for unemployment compensation. Since unemployment benefits are a taxable form of income, the state will send constituents a 1099-G form, also known as Certain Government Payments form if an unemployment claim has been made under your name. If you did not apply for unemployment or received the compensation, visit the [Illinois Department of Employment Services \(IDES\)](#) to report the fraud.
- Phishing and Malware Scams. Here, con artists will again use the IRS logo and send email or text messages to taxpayers asking for their personal and financial information. Some messages will also send you to a link that contains a malware virus that will enable scammers to access your information. One specific scam targets college students and faculty with .edu email addresses, asking them to fill out a form with all of their personal information. Unsolicited emails from IRS impersonators should be reported to the IRS at [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).
- Avoid “Ghost” tax return preparers. That is a tax return preparer who does not sign the tax return that they have prepared. By not signing the tax return, the preparer may overpromise a large refund, charge you based on the size of the refund, and/or send funds to their own bank accounts instead of the taxpayer.

### **Social Security Compromise**

If the IRS contacts you stating that your social security number has been compromised the following steps are recommended:

1. File a report with the [Illinois Attorney General](#)

2. Request Fraud Alert protection from one of the three major credit bureaus:

- Equifax, [www.Equifax.com](http://www.Equifax.com), 800-525-6285
- Experian, [www.Experian.com](http://www.Experian.com), 888-397-3742
- TransUnion, [www.TransUnion.com](http://www.TransUnion.com), 800-680-729

3. Contact your financial institution and close any accounts that were opened without your consent.

“Remember, neither the state nor the federal government will call taxpayers, threatening them and demanding payment via a wire transfer, or credit or debit card,” says Comptroller Mendoza. “That’s a sure sign of a scam.”

## **Find My Refund**

Now here’s the fun part. Once you file your state taxes, you can visit the [Find My Refund](#) feature on our website to check the status of your refund if applicable. We will check our records to determine if the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) has sent your information over to our office. The Comptroller’s Office cannot issue a refund until we receive a voucher from IDOR. Our office mails out state income tax refunds within 24-48 hours of receiving the voucher from IDOR.

Any tax related questions can be directed to the [Illinois Department of Revenue](#).

The deadline to file income taxes is April 15, 2024.