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**Tax Division announces steps to combat tax refund fraud**  
*Precautionary measures in place will help protect refunds and state dollars*

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – In response to reports last week of a surge in fraudulent refund activity in a number of states – including issues involving TurboTax personal tax preparation software – the Rhode Island Division of Taxation has begun implementing additional steps to combat tax refund fraud.

“The Rhode Island Division of Taxation’s measures to combat fraud are strong and our computer systems have not experienced any breaches to date,” Rhode Island Tax Administrator David M. Sullivan said. “The additional measures we are taking will help support our existing work to protect and warn against tax refund fraud and to ensure refunds are properly issued.”

“Due to the additional safeguards, some taxpayers may experience a slight delay in receiving their State of Rhode Island refund,” added Sullivan. “Taxation is working to ensure that all taxpayers receive their proper refund as promptly as possible. We want to minimize the impact to taxpayers, but it is essential that we take all necessary precautions to protect taxpayers and reduce the cost of fraud for the State of Rhode Island.”

The steps Taxation is taking include:

- reassigning additional staff this past weekend to manually review Rhode Island personal income tax returns and claims for refunds and look for patterns of fraudulent activity;
- working with Intuit and other software providers on improving technology to help weed out refund claims that are suspected to be fraudulent;
- continuing procedures in place to electronically and manually review refund claims before they are issued;
- and collaborating with other states and the Federation of Tax Administrators to help identify possible patterns of fraud.

If you file your Rhode Island personal income tax return electronically, it normally takes 10 to 15 business days until you receive your refund. This season, however, it may take up to 5 additional business days before you receive your refund.

If you file your return on paper, it normally takes four to six weeks until you receive your refund. This season, however, it may take an additional week.

Taxpayers can use the Rhode Island Division of Taxation's ["Where's My Refund?" online tool](#) to check on the status of their refunds.

### **Filing season guidance**

Taxation offered the following guidance to taxpayers regarding the Rhode Island personal income tax for tax year 2014:

- If you have filed your return and received your refund already, you should be all set.
- If you have filed your return and your refund is in process, please be patient while Taxation reviews your return. Your refund will be disbursed as soon as possible.
- If you have not filed your return yet, you are using widely available tax preparation software that is intended for personal use, and you have questions, please contact your software provider. (Intuit's toll-free number for this purpose is 1-800-944-8596.)

Taxation urges taxpayers and preparers to electronically file their state income tax returns. E-filing continues to be the safest and most effective way to file your return and get your refund. It cuts down on errors, saves taxpayers in postage costs, and saves the Division of Taxation – and, therefore, all taxpayers – money in processing and storage costs.

### **Using professional preparers**

Taxation also recommends that taxpayers consider using a professional to prepare their Rhode Island personal income tax returns:

- The IRS last week launched a new, online public directory of tax return preparers. The searchable directory is intended to help taxpayers find a tax professional with credentials and select qualifications to help them prepare their tax returns. (To use the directory, click [here](#).)
- The IRS also has information on how to choose a tax professional. (Click [here](#) for details.)
- Free tax help is available to those who qualify. (Click [here](#) for details.)

### **Steps that taxpayers can take to prevent identity theft**

There are steps that you can take to avoid identity theft in the first place. If you suspect that your identity has been stolen, take prompt action by alerting the IRS and Taxation:

- Complete and submit the ["IRS Identity Theft Affidavit" \(Form 14039\)](#).
- Call the Rhode Island Division of Taxation to make a report (you may also submit a copy of the ["IRS Identity Theft Affidavit"](#) to the Division of Taxation). Call (401) 574-8829 and select Option 3, or write: Rhode Island Division of Taxation, Personal Income Tax Section, One Capitol Hill, Providence, R.I. 02908.

If the IRS or Taxation discovers that someone has already filed for a tax refund in your name, you will be notified by letter. Please respond immediately, following the instructions

provided in the letter. The IRS last month issued a fact sheet with details about identity theft information for taxpayers and victims. (To view it, click [here](#).)

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