



For Immediate Release

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### **IRS, States and Tax Industry Announce New Steps to Help Public to Protect Personal Tax Data**

The Georgia Department of Revenue has teamed up with the IRS and Tax Industry partners in a new, nationwide, initiative to help combat tax fraud.

On Thursday, November 19, Tax authorities made the appeal to the public in Washington, D.C. at a news conference that included more than a dozen state tax agency executives, IRS Commissioner John Koskinen and representatives of the tax preparation and software developer industries.

"Identity thieves are evolving, and so must we," said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. "The IRS, the states and the tax industry are putting in place even tougher safeguards. But, we need the public's help. We need people to join with us and take an active role in protecting their personal and financial data from thieves."

A few steps you can take to better protect yourself:

- Use security software with firewall and anti-virus protections. Use automatic updates. Encrypt your tax returns and other sensitive data. Use strong passwords.
- Beware of phishing emails. Are you expecting a message from your bank or tax software company to update your account? A link may take you to a fake website that is designed to steal your log-on information. The attachment you open may include a program that allows a thief to get into your sensitive file.
- Beware of phone scams. If you get a call from an aggressive or belligerent person who says you will be sued or jailed if you don't make an immediate payment, know this: that person is a fraud. Clever criminals pose as trusted organizations.
- Protect your personal information. Treat your Social Security number, your driver's license number and other personal data as you would cash - don't leave it lying around. Don't overshare on social media.

Tax preparation businesses also can help by sharing information with clients. Tips for customers are available in a new IRS publication, Publication 4524, Security Awareness for Taxpayers. And, the IRS created a new resource page at <https://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Taxes-Security-Together>.

Many of these new safeguards are invisible to taxpayers but will help the states and IRS verify the identity of the taxpayer and the validity of the tax return. There are new password standards for tax software. And, the IRS, the states and the industry are sharing more information about identity theft schemes. (See IRS [Fact Sheet 2015-23](#) for details.)

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