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Mar. 28, 2013

March 27 — Gov. Chris Christie apologized Monday to the 9,000 tax filers who applied in February for a refund on their income taxes, only to be told wrongly their refunds would be delayed by three months and that they had to provide additional details to prove their identities.

Christie's comments on New Jersey 101.5's "Ask the Governor" don't ease the headaches for 13,000 other filers still being affected by the state's stepped-up efforts to fight identity theft. They've been told they must provide copies of their Social Security cards, W-2 forms and recent pay stubs before the state will send their rebates and that the review could take up to 90 days.

"Let me apologize on behalf of the Department of Treasury to you and other folks who may have been ensnared in this effort inadvertently," Christie said. "I'm not happy with what's gone on at Treasury in this regard, and I've made it very clear to the treasurer that I'm unhappy with it."

New Jersey has stepped up efforts, as have other states and the Internal Revenue Service, to reduce tax-refund identity fraud, in which people attempt to claim another person's refund by filing for refunds using Social Security numbers and made-up income and tax numbers.

Last year, the program focused mostly on attempted abuse of the earned income tax credit. This year, the state is using software to screen more tax returns for discrepancies, but Christie said an "overaggressive" Division of Taxation didn't calibrate it correctly and that "some people are being hassled in a way that I think is inappropriate."

“It’s this type of confusion that just makes people concerned and worried about

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tagged two weeks ago.

Some of the 13,000 filers whose refunds are delayed have said they suspect the moves are an effort by the state to hold onto money longer. The state denies the program is part of a cash-flow strategy.

Heather Kelco of Aberdeen said she received letters seeking the additional information last year and again this year on returns that claim very few deductions and small refunds. She said she still hasn’t received last year’s refund despite sending the requested information twice.

“Receiving this letter for a second year is frustrating and absurd. If I owed money to the state would I be allowed a multiple year delay in payment?” Kelco said.

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Income Tax

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