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Refunds

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Two Miami-Dade women have been charged with preparing dozens of phony income-tax returns and pocketing a chunk of the multimillion-dollar refunds, the U.S. attorney's office said Tuesday.

Claudia Zuloaga, 43, and Sharon Elizabeth Angulo, 49, were charged with one count of conspiring to defraud the Internal Revenue Service and more than 30 counts of preparing false tax returns.

The defendants, who operated a tax-preparation business, are accused of recruiting clients by falsely promising they could eliminate a substantial portion of their debts by obtaining sizable tax refunds for them, according to the indictment.

The women prepared the fraudulent returns in exchange for fees equal to 30 percent of the tax refunds issued over a four-year period, according to the indictment filed by prosecutor Peter Outerbridge.

In a related civil case, the IRS sued Zuloaga in 2012, accusing her of orchestrating a "tax-fraud scheme" for clients by submitting bogus tax-refund requests.

The IRS called her theory of tax law "pure fiction" — after paying her clients \$3 million in unjustified tax refunds, court records show. A federal judge issued an injunction preventing Zuloaga from working on any more tax returns.

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