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agencies

IRS Expands Law Enforcement Assistance Program on Identity Theft to 50 States; Victim Assistance and Criminal Investigations Grow

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Mar. 28, 2013

WASHINGTON — The [Internal Revenue Service](#) is expanding its Law Enforcement Assistance Program to all states and more local law enforcement groups across the country.

The program, which had been in a pilot phase, help law enforcement agencies obtain tax return data vital to their local efforts in investigating and prosecuting specific cases of identity theft.

More than 1,560 waiver requests have been received since the Law Enforcement Assistance Program's inception from over 100 state and local law enforcement agencies in the nine states participating in the pilot. The expansion covers all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia and will be effective Friday, March 29, 2013.

"The results of the pilot illustrate that this works as an innovative tool for law enforcement to help pursue tough identity theft situations," said IRS Acting Commissioner Steven T. Miller. "This program is an effective way for law enforcement to work with the IRS to pursue identity thieves and protect taxpayers. Expanding the program and making it permanent on a nationwide basis makes sense for victims as well as law enforcement and tax administration."

The IRS also announced today continued progress on several areas involving identity theft, including resolution of more victim cases and continued emphasis on criminal investigations.

Since the start of 2013, the IRS has worked with victims to resolve and close more

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custody with sentences as long as 20 years.

“The IRS continues to aggressively work identity theft issues on multiple fronts, focusing on helping victims of this terrible crime and pursuing the perpetrators across the nation,” Miller said. “The pilot expansion will help these efforts.”

After an initial, successful pilot that started in Florida last April, the IRS expanded the program to eight additional states in October 2012. Together, the nine states represented a large percentage of the overall identity theft refund fraud seen by the IRS. In addition to the initial state of Florida, the pilot program expanded to include Alabama, California, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Texas.

Like the pilot program, state and local law enforcement officials with evidence of identity theft involving fraudulently filed federal tax returns will receive permission from the identity theft victim by having them complete a special IRS disclosure form so the IRS can provide law enforcement with the fraudulently filed tax return. Law enforcement officials will need to contact the identity theft victims to request and secure the victims' consent for disclosure of the records. As previously, the IRS will assist law enforcement in locating taxpayers and soliciting their consent.

Law enforcement representatives can then submit a disclosure authorization form, which the IRS created solely for use by victims of identity theft for this program, to the Criminal Investigation Division of the IRS, along with a copy of the police report and the [IRS Identity Theft Affidavit](#) if available. It is important that identity theft victims still submit the original copy of the IRS Identity Theft Affidavit to the IRS according to the instructions on the back of the form that fit their specific circumstances.

Federal law imposes restrictions on sharing of taxpayer information, including

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Law enforcement interested in working with the IRS should contact their local IRS Criminal Investigation field office.

This January, the IRS also conducted a coordinated and highly successful identity theft enforcement sweep. The coast-to-coast effort against identity theft suspects led to 734 enforcement actions in January, including 298 indictments, informations, complaints and arrests. The effort comes on top of a growing identity theft effort that led to 2,400 other enforcement actions against identity thieves during fiscal year 2012.

“The IRS and its law enforcement partners at the federal, state and local level are going after the perpetrators of these crimes, and people are going to jail for a long time as a result,” Miller said.

The IRS has a comprehensive and aggressive identity theft strategy employing a three-pronged effort focusing on fraud prevention, early detection and victim assistance. The agency is continually reviewing processes and policies to ensure that we are doing everything possible to minimize identity theft incidents, to help those victimized by it and to investigate those who are committing the crimes.

In fiscal 2012, the IRS prevented the issuance of more than \$20 billion in fraudulent refunds — up from \$14 billion the year before. IRS efforts stopped 5 million suspicious returns in 2012 — up from 3 million suspicious returns stopped in 2011.

Taxpayers looking for additional information can consult the [Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft](#) or the [IRS Identity Theft Protection page](#) on the IRS website.

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