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## Fraudulent Refunds

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**Internal Revenue Service** investigators have charged a Northeast Portland woman of filing as many as 173 fraudulent tax returns claiming more than a \$1 million in refunds.

Teresa Lorraine Saunders, 50, who was arrested one month ago and detained, was indicted in U.S. District Court in Portland this week. An IRS spokesman said he didn't know where Saunders was being held but added that it's likely she'll be held until her trial.

Saunders, whose company Diversity Business Group was registered with the state, is accused of charging an exorbitant fee — often customers' full refunds — to prepare and file tax returns, according to a federal complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Portland on Thursday. She also is accused of paying others between \$100 and \$1,000 to refer clients and then misstating those customers' income to exploit earned-income tax credits, according to the complaint.

A special IRS investigations unit in Ogden, Utah, first became aware of Saunders' alleged scheme in early January 2014, after identifying 24 tax returns with similar income amounts filed in 2012 from the same IP (internet protocol) address, the complaint said.

The court filings state that the IRS unit identified another 109 questionable forms filed in the 2011, 2012, and 2013 tax years. The returns claimed refunds totaling

\$504,952. In early March 2014, investigators served a search warrant at Saunders'

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“First of all I am not doing anything wrong and they can't do anything about it. The thing is that people need to let them know they are doing their own taxes with my help. Second they think what I'm getting paid is for taxes instead of knowing it's the fee for helping them with their business...”

“No one is doing anything wrong,” the text allegedly continued. ” I know what I'm talking about. Either you trust me or you don't that's your choice.”

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Income Tax • IRS

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