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## Annual Review

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The agency that oversees the Internal Revenue Service, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), has published its annual interim report on the performance of the taxing agency during the 2015 income tax filing season.

TIGTA found that as a result of continued budget cuts, the IRS is depending even more on technology-based services and that external partners with fewer customers are receiving assistance from the IRS this year. The tax agency is continuing to expand its fraud detection efforts, TIGTA found.

The filing season, defined as the period from January 1 through mid-April, is critical for the IRS because it is during this time that most individuals file their income tax returns and contact the IRS if they have questions about specific laws or filing procedures. The objective of this review was to provide selected information related to the IRS's 2015 Filing Season. TIGTA plans to issue the final results of its analysis of the 2015 Filing Season in September 2015.

"The IRS's efforts to monitor and prepare for the legislative extension of certain tax provisions prior to the start of the filing season enabled it to begin the filing season as scheduled," said J. Russell George, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration. "However, this filing season it has become increasingly difficult for taxpayers contacting the IRS by telephone to reach an assistor."

As of March 6, 2015, the IRS received more than 66.7 million tax returns—more than 62.3 million (93.5 percent) were filed electronically and more than 4.3 million (6.5

percent) were filed on paper. The IRS has issued more than 54.2 million refunds

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million (76.8 percent) in fraudulent refunds. In addition, the IRS reports that expanded use of controls to identify fraudulent refund claims before they are accepted into the processing system has identified approximately 37,000 fraudulent electronically filed tax returns and approximately 10,000 paper tax returns as of March 5, 2015. The IRS also identified and confirmed 16,523 fraudulent tax returns involving identity theft as of February 28, 2015, and identified 26,797 prisoner tax returns for screening as of March 7, 2015.

During Fiscal Year 2015, the IRS plans to assist 5.3 million taxpayers through face-to-face contact at the Taxpayer Assistance Centers, which is a nearly 4 percent decrease from Fiscal Year 2014. As of March 7, 2015, approximately 45.6 million taxpayers contacted the IRS by calling the various Customer Account Services function's toll-free telephone assistance lines. IRS assistors have answered 4.2 million calls and have achieved a 38.5 percent Level of Service with a 24.6 minute Average Speed of Answer. The Level of Service for the 2014 Filing Season was 74.7 percent. However, the IRS continues to expand its self-assistance options that taxpayers can access 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including its IRS2Go app; YouTube channels; interactive self-help tools on IRS.gov; and Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook accounts

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