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IRS | Direct File



By Andrea Cristina Mercado, Miami Herald (TNS)

Filing taxes in the United States is a challenging process. Each year, taxpayers grapple with a convoluted, inefficient and perplexing tax filing system. These challenges have an outsized impact on Latino taxpayers, particularly those from low-income, non-English-first speaking households. While individuals of any background face the risk of being targeted by the predatory tax filing industry, Latinos are often more likely to fall victim to unqualified service providers who prey on the community.

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With tax filing season in full swing, Latinos may turn to for-profit tax preparers. That may include [notarios](#), who sometimes take advantage of those who come from countries where a notario is regarded as a qualified professional with the necessary credentials to file on behalf of immigrants. However, in the United States, these individuals often operate as financial predators, exploiting vulnerabilities within our communities, charging exorbitant fees and putting vulnerable taxpayers in jeopardy with the IRS.

Other Latino filers will turn to online tax filing services, some of which been accused of [taking advantage of American taxpayers](#) and [falsely marketing their services as free](#). Others may rely on unregulated storefront tax preparation companies that prey on low-income filers, committing intentional or unintentional [errors](#) on tax returns, causing people to miss out on credits they are owed. Recently, both TurboTax and H&R Block have been in hot water with the FTC involving deceptive marketing claims.

The IRS's national taxpayer advocate has described the current state of the industry as "[the wild, wild West](#)," pointing to the level of risk for abuse. An estimated [87 million taxpayers may lose as much as \\$13 billion](#) annually to unnecessary fees, often because these filers have no other obvious choice. Not only do these fees hit harder in low-income communities, we know that tax preparation companies sometimes prey on people with precarious financial situations.

These tax scams take money directly out of the hands of our communities through hidden added fees and [reduce these taxpayers' access](#) to important poverty-reducing programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC). Roughly [one in five](#) eligible families don't get their EITC because it's too hard or expensive to file taxes. Similarly, Latino and Black families eligible for the expanded CTC were also among the [least likely](#) to receive it in 2021. This only exacerbates existing access disparities.

We deserve better. As an organizer and leader of Florida Rising, a statewide

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