



HAMILTON COUNTY COALITION to **STOP** FRAUD, SCAMS & ABUSE



Urban League of
Greater Cincinnati



United Way
of Greater Cincinnati



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Cincinnati IRS and Community Leaders Warn Residents of Tax Scams *Eligible residents can receive free tax preparation assistance at 13 locations across Hamilton County*

CINCINNATI – As 2012 tax season begins, community leaders gathered today to warn Hamilton County residents about tax scams. Hamilton County Commission President Greg Hartmann created a partnership between the Cincinnati office of the IRS Criminal Investigation Unit and the Hamilton County Coalition to Stop Fraud, Scams and Abuse to spread the word about the dangers of tax scams and direct residents to seek reputable, free tax preparation assistance.

“Fraudulent tax preparers are increasingly targeting residents facing financial hardship who are desperate for extra money, and are offering to help them get larger tax refunds than they are entitled to receive,” said Commissioner Hartmann. “We’re asking residents to be cautious when choosing a tax preparer and to seek the assistance of reputable community agencies to avoid becoming a victim of these scams.”

Tax scammers often target lower-income residents, senior citizens and students. Representatives of the IRS, United Way of Greater Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority, the Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio, the University of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Job & Family Services joined Commissioner Hartmann at the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati on today. These community agencies and others are partnering to proactively educate residents they serve about tax scams as members of the Hamilton County Coalition to Stop Fraud, Scams and Abuse.

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Unscrupulous tax preparers may target residents at their churches, outside of housing complexes or at their place of business. Materials often advertise an ability to achieve an inflated tax refund. The IRS cautions that scammers usually file fraudulent tax returns with false information about income or household size – and then charge hundreds or thousands of dollars in fees that the victim may have to pay back to the IRS.

“Taxpayers must keep in mind they are personally responsible for the information on their tax return, even if they receive assistance with preparing their taxes,” said Darryl Williams, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Cincinnati office of the IRS. “The IRS Criminal Investigation Unit is stepping up our efforts this year to pursue tax fraud, and individuals with fraudulent tax returns can face significant prison time as well as payment of back taxes with interest and penalties.”

Residents are encouraged to seek the assistance of the United Way of Greater Cincinnati when preparing their taxes to avoid becoming the victim of a scam. Taxpayers earning less than \$49,000 can receive free assistance preparing their state and federal returns from IRS-certified volunteers at 13 community sites across Hamilton County.

“In 2011, almost 17,000 families in the Greater Cincinnati region took advantage of the United Way’s free and fair tax preparation services,” said Robert Reifsnyder, president of United Way of Greater Cincinnati. “Low income individuals and families are particularly vulnerable to tax scams, and our services can help taxpayers pursue the legitimate tax credits they are entitled to.”

For more information about tax fraud or preparing your 2011 tax returns, visit www.irs.gov. A list of the United Way’s free tax preparation sites can be accessed by calling the United Way’s community service hotline at 211 or visiting www.makeworkpay.com.

About the Hamilton County Coalition to Stop Fraud, Scams & Abuse

The Hamilton County Coalition to Stop Fraud, Scams & Abuse is a partnership of social service agencies, business leaders, nonprofits and local law enforcement united to pro-actively educate Hamilton County residents on the dangers of consumer fraud, identity theft and scams in our community. The Coalition developed a *Comprehensive Community Plan* to help consumers, created a website www.hamilton-co.org/fraud and conducts monthly community outreach events to educate citizens in our community to detect, prevent and report fraud and scams.

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