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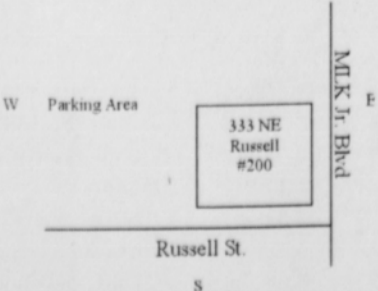


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LAW/JUSTICE

Tax Preparer Mistakes Cost Consumers

Warning about services issued

According to a Better Business Bureau study, nearly one-third of complaints against tax preparation companies allege that the preparer made an error or mistake in their tax return, resulting in the consumer having to pay fines or added fees to rectify the problem.

"Few things are as certain as death and taxes, and it's also true that few things are as scary—that's why more than half of the 120 million American taxpayers enlist the help of a tax preparer every year," said Robert Andrew, president and chief executive officer of the BBB serving Alaska, Oregon, and Western Washington. "However, consumers end up being held responsible when their tax preparer makes mistakes or errors on their return. This can mean fees and fines adding up to thousands of dollars that they owe the government."

Mistakes and errors are the most common complaint category against tax preparers. Approximately 20 percent of complaints



allege that the tax preparer was simply unresponsive. Typically, the tax preparer did not return repeated calls or attempts by the complainant to receive assistance. Many complainants noted that they felt frantic as they faced filing deadlines or audits, and were not receiving any help from their tax preparer. Disputes over billing accounted for 19 percent of complaints to the BBB. Typically, consumers were shocked when they received a high bill for having their taxes prepared or felt that they did not receive the

level of service they paid for. Almost 7 percent of complainants say the tax preparation company was rude, and 6 percent of complainants say they didn't receive their refund. The most disturbing finding may be that 6.3 percent of complainants allege that the tax preparer never filed their tax return at all. The BBB wants to warn consumers that when the IRS detects a false return, the taxpayer, not the tax preparer, must pay any additional taxes as well as any other associated interest, fees and penalties.

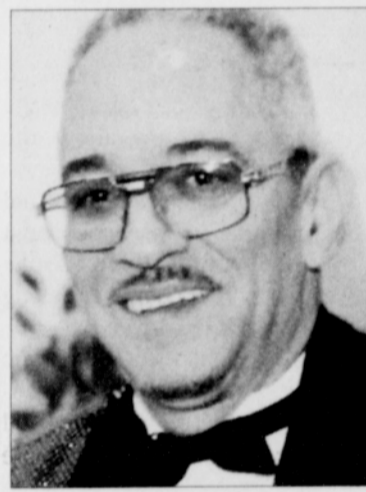
The taxpayer is responsible for all information submitted to the IRS. Many tax preparers provide quality services to their clients, but the BBB encourages consumers to use the same caution in selecting tax preparation help as they do when they select other professional services such as doctors or lawyers. Your BBB offers the following advice when searching for help with taxes:

Ask around. Get referrals from friends and family on who they use, and get a free reliability report on a tax preparation business from the BBB website at bbb.org. Ideally, tax preparers should either be a certified public accountant, a tax attorney or an enrolled agent. All three can represent taxpayers before the IRS in all matters, including an audit. Also, find out if the preparer is affiliated with a professional organization that holds its members to a code of ethics. Don't fall for the promise of a big refund. Be wary of any tax preparation businesses that promise larger refunds than the competition, and avoid tax preparers who base their fee on a percentage of your refund.

Obama Ex-Minister to Address NAACP

(AP) — The embattled former minister of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama has been selected as the keynote speaker for the Detroit branch of the NAACP's 53rd Annual Fight for Freedom Fund dinner.

The civil rights organization said Thursday the Rev. Jeremiah Wright will speak April 27 at the event, whose past speakers have included Obama, Sen. Hillary Clinton and former President Bill Clinton.



Rev. Jeremiah Wright

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Freedom Fund dinner draws about 10,000 people.

Wright has been criticized for remarks about everything from race relations to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. He recently retired from Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ.

Obama has denounced the most inflammatory of Wright's comments, but says he shouldn't be judged solely on a handful of remarks.

Armed Tavern Robber Wanted

The Portland Police Bureau, in cooperation with Crimes Stoppers, is asking for your help in solving a tavern robbery.

On Friday, March 28, at 1 a.m., Andy's Inn, located at 7901 S.E. Foster Rd., was robbed at gunpoint by a lone man. Armed with a handgun, he ordered the employee and patrons to the ground and told them he wasn't afraid to shoot anyone. The suspect took an undisclosed amount of money and left out the door.

He is described as a black male in his late 30s or early 40s. The 6-foot-1 to 6-foot-2-inch man is said to have a thin build. He was wearing yellow goggles over his eyes, a yellow hooded windbreaker, a knit cap underneath and blue jeans.

Crimes Stoppers is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information, reported to Crime Stoppers, that leads to a resolution in this case, and you remain anonymous. Call Crime Stoppers at 503-823-HELP (4357).

Firefighter Gets 2 Months for Fraud

(AP) — A former Portland firefighter who collected disability payments while working as a medic in Iraq has been sentenced to two months in jail.

Mark Vrvilo, 43, was charged with stealing \$19,622 from Portland's Fire and Police Disability and Retirement Fund by claiming his injury was keeping him from working even though

he worked various jobs between 2001 and 2004.

Prosecutor Dennis Shen asked Multnomah County Judge Henry Kantor to sentence Vrvilo to more than two years in prison, saying he consciously cheated the system out nearly \$100,000.

But defense attorney, John Culver, asked the judge not to

send his client to prison because he needed to continue treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

"The only purpose of sending him to prison would be as punishment, which I know is what the state wants," Culver said. "However, the best thing for the community's interests would be to have Mr. Vrvilo rehabilitated."

Man Convicted in Bank Heist

After four days of trial, a federal jury recently convicted Ralph Rene Williams, 57, of Portland, for the Aug. 14 robbery of the Lombard-Emerald branch of U.S. Bank in north Portland.

Ralph Rene Williams, 57, who previously served 15 years in prison for robbery when he

robbed the First Interstate Bank on North Denver Avenue, now faces sentencing on June 20 for new conviction that can carry another 20 years in prison. In both cases, he wore a full disguise.

Williams was released from custody late in 2004 and was on supervised release at the time of the August bank robbery in which over \$27,000 in cash was stolen.

The case was investigated by the FBI and prosecuted by federal prosecutors.

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