



PRESS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Cincinnati Field Office *Special Agent in Charge Kathy A. Enstrom*

Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2013

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CI Release #: CINFO-2013-08

LOCAL MAN SENTENCED IN ID THEFT AND TAX REFUND SCAM

Cincinnati, Ohio – Dione Howard, 33, of Cincinnati, Ohio was sentenced to twelve months and one day in prison, three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$30,129 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) relative to his role in an income tax refund scheme in which he conspired to file false claims for federal income tax refunds with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and for the unlawful use of a means of identification. Howard previously pleaded guilty to the aforementioned charges on March 13, 2013.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio and Kathy A. Enstrom, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, Cincinnati Field Office announced the sentence handed down by Senior U.S. District Judge Sandra S. Beckwith.

According to court documents, between January 2012 and April 2012 Dione Howard purchased 18 names, social security numbers and dates of birth from a co-conspirator for \$3,500. Howard used this information to prepare and electronically file at least nine false claims with the IRS for income tax refunds.

Howard used the names, social security numbers and dates of birth as both taxpayer information and dependent information on the false claims in order to maximize the income tax refund amounts.

Howard attempted to have the income tax refunds deposited on prepaid debit cards, but instead received the income tax refunds in the form of U.S. Treasury checks. Howard then provided the income tax refund checks to a co-conspirator to be cashed. Once cashed, Howard received a portion of each check, ranging anywhere from \$600 to \$1,600.

In addition, on one occasion Howard kept a Turbo Tax prepaid debit card in the name of another individual that was mailed to his residence, which contained a fraudulent income tax refund. Howard knew the prepaid debit card resulted from the filing of a false income tax return and he did not receive permission from this individual to use or possess the prepaid debit card.

The actual total tax loss to the IRS in this case is \$30,129.

"This unscrupulous defendant thought he had figured out a clever scheme to thwart the IRS and steal from American taxpayers," said Kathy A. Enstrom, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Cincinnati Field Office. "The IRS has made investigating refund fraud and identity theft a top priority and we will vigorously pursue those who undermine the integrity of the U.S. tax system."

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jessica W. Knight and was investigated by special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation.

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