



# PRESS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation  
Cincinnati Field Office  
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## LOCAL INCOME TAX PREPARER SENTENCED IN INCOME TAX REFUND FRAUD CONSPIRACY

*Restitution to the IRS of \$748,843.80*

CINCINNATI, OHIO – Ruth Benton, 37, of Cincinnati, Ohio was sentenced to serve 27 months in prison, 3 years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$748,843.80 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for conspiring to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with IRS. Benton previously pleaded guilty to this offence on November 5, 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 today by Senior U.S. District Judge Herman J. Weber.

According to court documents, between January 2011 and March 2011, Benton conspired with Shacretta Williams and others to prepare and file false claims for income tax refunds with the IRS in the form of federal income tax returns for the 2010 income tax year. Benton and Williams worked together at several income tax preparation businesses in Cincinnati, Ohio, including Jackson Hewitt, Ohio Instant Tax, and Your Tax Service. Benton owned Your Tax Service, which she opened in January 2011. Although the conspiracy is limited to the 2010 income tax year, Benton prepared false income tax returns during the 2005 through 2009 income tax years as well. Benton prepared false claims for income tax refunds because she expected, and often received, a part of her client's income tax refund once the income tax refund check was cashed.

Benton and Williams began preparing and filing false claims for income tax refunds as employees at Jackson Hewitt. They created fictitious Forms W-2 and included non-qualifying children as dependents in order to maximize the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Additional Child Tax Credit.

Benton and Williams then worked as employees for Ohio Instant Tax, where they modified the scheme by also claiming false self-employment income on Forms Schedule C, Profit or Loss from Business. At Your Tax Service, Benton and Williams prepared and filed false claims for income tax refunds by not only

including false dependents and self-employment income, but by also claiming qualifying education expenses in order to get the refundable education credit.

Benton applied for an Electronic Filer Identification Number (EFIN) for Your Tax Service. The IRS denied this application. However, Benton located a company online called EVital that was willing to illegally lease an EFIN for Your Tax Service. This EFIN was subsequently used by Benton, Williams, and others at Your Tax Service to file false claims for income tax refunds with the IRS.

After an income tax return had been accepted by the IRS and the income tax refund had been issued, Benton called her clients to come into the office to pick-up their income tax refund checks. Benton or another employee at Your Tax Service escorted the clients to a local check cashing business. Benton or the employee would take a portion of the income tax refund in cash, even though the \$310 income tax return preparation fee had already been deducted from the client's income tax refund check. The client's would keep the remaining amount of the income tax refund check.

During the 2010 income tax year, Benton, Williams, and others prepared and filed at least 260 false claims for income tax refunds with the IRS. The total intended tax loss to the IRS for the 2009 and 2010 tax years was \$1,106,415.

On September 30, 2014 Shacretta Williams, 38, of Cincinnati, Ohio, pleaded guilty before Senior U.S. District Judge Hernan J. Weber to conspiring to file false claims for income tax refunds with the IRS as a result of her actions in this scheme. Williams was released on bond and a sentencing date was set for December 3, 2014.

"Ruth Benton perpetrated a scheme that systematically defrauded the government and the taxpaying public," said Kathy A. Enstrom, Special Agent in Charge, Criminal Investigation, Cincinnati Field Office. "IRS Criminal Investigation will continue to vigorously pursue those who unjustly enrich themselves by preparing false claims for refunds."

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

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