



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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### **Former Rhode Island Tax Return Preparer Sentenced to Prison for Tax Preparation Fraud Scheme and Aggravated Identity Theft**

A Cranston, Rhode Island resident was sentenced to serve 36 months in prison today for aiding and assisting in the preparation of false tax returns, wire fraud, theft of government funds and aggravated identity theft, announced Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciruolo, head of the Justice Department's Tax Division, and U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha for the District of Rhode Island.

Belkis M. Guzman, 48, was a former employee of El Centro Multiservicios LLC, a tax preparation business located in Providence, Rhode Island. Guzman was involved in two separate and distinct schemes. The first scheme involved the preparation and presentation of false individual income tax returns (Forms 1040) on behalf of El Centro clients for tax years 2009, 2010, and 2011, on which Guzman created, inflated and falsified dependents, exemptions, credits, deductions and expenses.

The second scheme involved the deposit of more than 100 U.S. Treasury checks into Guzman's personal checking account. The Treasury checks were generated by the filing of fraudulent individual income tax returns containing stolen personal identifying information and fraudulent amounts of income, deductions and credits. Guzman aided the scheme by depositing more than \$800,700 in fraudulently obtained refund checks into her bank account after signing many of the checks in place of the payees who were unknown to her, and then providing a majority of the proceeds to a third party in the form of cash and personal checks. Guzman received a percentage as payment for depositing the checks into her account.

Guzman previously pleaded guilty on Sept. 8, to aiding and assisting in the preparation of false tax returns, wire fraud, theft of government funds and aggravated identity theft. In addition to the prison term imposed, Guzman was also ordered to serve three years of supervised release and to pay \$928,224.95 in restitution to the IRS.

Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Ciruolo and U.S. Attorney Neronha commended the hard work of special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation, who conducted the investigation, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Rose and Tax Division Trial Attorney Christopher O'Donnell, who prosecuted this case.

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