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## State of Utah Department of Commerce

FRANCINE A. GIANI  
Executive Director

THOMAS A. BRADY  
Deputy Director

DANIEL O'BANNON  
Director, Division of Consumer Protection

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### MEDIA ALERT

#### **"Phony IRS lawsuit calls continue to harass Utah citizens with empty threats"**

*"TIGTA reports Utahns sent \$18,379 to IRS scammers from Jan. 5 to March 1, 2016"*

(For immediate release...)

**SALT LAKE CITY, Utah** - Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, announced today that the Division of Consumer Protection continues to receive reports from Utah citizens called by con artists claiming to be Internal Revenue Service (IRS) representatives who are threatening lawsuits, warrants for arrest, fines and other punishments if their requests aren't met right away. Previously, scam reports included callers claiming the Utah consumer has an IRS refund coming to them in order to gain personal bank account information. Spanish speaking residents have also been threatened over the phone with deportation if they don't respond. The Division of Consumer Protection is reminding the public that whatever the fraud scenario, the Internal Revenue Service would never call you on the phone regarding a personal tax matter.

"It is disturbing that 4 Utah victims have lost \$18,379 to these scams since New Year's Day. Remember the Internal Revenue Service will never call and threaten you over the phone. Hang up and contact the IRS yourself if you have valid concerns," advised Francine A. Giani.

According to the Treasury Inspector General of the Tax Administrator (TIGTA) between October 2013 and January 2016, 57 Utahns lost a total of \$431, 782 to phony IRS calls. The public is advised to remain alert as many of these calls continue long after tax filing is over.

"IRS scam calls are no longer limited to tax season. Fraudsters have found a hot button to bilk money from law abiding citizens year round so please remain vigilant when the phone rings with an empty threat," advised Daniel O'Bannon, Director, Utah Division of Consumer Protection.

According to the IRS, other states have suffered severe financial losses with California, New York and Texas topping TIGTA's 50 states list. Since October 2013, 1028 California

citizens lost \$6,447,109, 534 New York residents parted with \$2,433,579 and 444 Texans sent \$1,960,007 to IRS fraudsters. Utah's losses put the Beehive State at #20 nationally for IRS scams.

**Tips for Consumers: 5 IRS Phony Phone Call Red Flags**

Below are 5 red flags to be aware of; actions that the Internal Revenue Service would never employ when contacting a citizen about their taxes;

1. Call you regarding owed taxes without first mailing you an official notice.
2. Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount the IRS claims you owe.
3. Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card or send money via wire transfer.
4. Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
5. Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

**What to do if you get a Phony IRS phone call**

If you receive a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money, here are steps you can take:

- If you know you owe taxes or think you might owe, call the IRS at 1.800.829.1040. IRS workers can help you with a payment issue.
- If you know you don't owe taxes or have no reason to believe that you do, report the incident to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) at 1.800.366.4484 or at [www.tigta.gov](http://www.tigta.gov).
- You can file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) . If the complaint involves someone impersonating the IRS; include the words "IRS Telephone Scam" in the notes.

In addition, the Internal Revenue Service reminds the public that their employees do not use unsolicited emails, text messages or any social media to discuss personal tax issues. For more information on reporting tax scams, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and type "scam" in the search box. For more information about the Utah Division of Consumer Protection log on to; [www.consumerprotection.utah.gov](http://www.consumerprotection.utah.gov)

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For media enquiries contact:

**Jennifer Bolton**

Public Information Officer

Utah Department of Commerce

(801) 530-6646 office

(801) 652-8322 cell

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