

**Issue Number: IR-2015-22**

## **Inside This Issue**

---

# **IRS Launches Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers; Online Tool Offers New Option to Help Taxpayers**

WASHINGTON—The Internal Revenue Service today announced the launch of a new, online public directory of tax return preparers. This searchable directory on IRS.gov will help taxpayers find a tax professional with credentials and select qualifications to help them prepare their tax returns.

“This new directory will be a practical tool for the millions of Americans who rely on the services of a paid return preparer,” said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. “Taxpayers can also look to these tax professionals for help if they have questions about the new health care provisions on this year’s tax forms.”

The directory is a searchable, sortable listing featuring: the name, city, state and zip code of attorneys, CPAs, enrolled agents and those who have completed the requirements for the voluntary IRS [Annual Filing Season Program](#) (AFSP). All preparers listed also have valid 2015 Preparer Tax Identification Numbers (PTIN).

Taxpayers may [search the directory](#) using the preferred credentials or qualifications they seek in a preparer, or by a preparer’s location, including professionals who practice abroad. Tax return preparers with PTINs who are not attorneys, CPAs, enrolled agents or AFSP participants are not included in the directory, nor are volunteer tax return preparers who offer free services.

The directory can also be a resource for taxpayers who may want to get help from tax professionals on the Affordable Care Act tax provisions that affect returns filed this year.

The vast majority of people will only have to check a box on their federal income tax returns to indicate they had health coverage. Others may have Marketplace coverage with tax credits, have exemptions or need them, or may have to make a payment because they could afford to buy health insurance but chose not to.

The IRS provides extensive information on [IRS.gov/aca](#) to help taxpayers better understand the details of the new health care law. Many tax professionals, including those listed on the new directory, will be able to help taxpayers understand these changes.

More than 140 million individual tax returns were filed last year, and more than half of them were prepared with the help of a paid return preparer. To help taxpayers navigate the different types of professional tax help available, last December, the IRS unveiled [IRS.gov/chooseataxpro](#), a page that explains the different categories of professionals. Taxpayers can also use a new

[partner page](#) available on IRS.gov that provides links to the web sites of national non-profit tax professional groups, which can help provide additional information for taxpayers seeking the right type of qualified help.

The IRS also offers [free tax return preparation](#) for eligible taxpayers. But whether using a paid tax professional, relying on the help of a volunteer or preparing their own returns, taxpayers should consider preparing and filing their returns electronically. Electronic filing is the easiest way to file a complete and accurate tax return. There are a variety of electronic [filing options](#), including [IRS Free File](#) for qualified taxpayers, [commercial software](#) and [professional assistance](#).

In 2010, the IRS launched the Tax Return Preparer Initiative that generally requires anyone who prepares federal tax returns for compensation to obtain a PTIN from the IRS. As of the start of the filing season, more than 666,000 tax return preparers have active PTINs for 2015. Currently, anyone with a valid PTIN can prepare federal tax returns for compensation. At a minimum, taxpayers should make sure their tax preparer has a valid PTIN and includes it on the tax return.