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## OTHER VOICES

# Beware Tax 'Fixers' Who Prey On Fear

By Anthony Parent

I've got to rant. I'm tired of people getting ripped off.

As a tax attorney, we see a lot of folks in serious trouble with the IRS — especially in this horrific economy. We also see the aftermath when they try to save themselves with one of those “tax resolution” companies. You've seen their ads on TV. They are scary, shadowy, or just too good to be true.



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And I'll be honest. I haven't run into one that's worth a dime. But still, the IRS allows these “enrolled agents” to market across the United States in ways a lawyer never could or would. Why the IRS allows this to go on, I can't be sure.

These “tax resolution firms” misrepresent themselves in ads, online and in the Yellow Pages. And don't get me started on the junk mail. If you have a tax lien against you, strange people from strange places will bury you with junk mail with either a big scare or big promises or both.

But these scammers aren't happy with bombarding people with piles of junk mail. They will get a list of those with tax liens and, through the miracle of boiler-room cold calling, harass them on the phone.

And just what do they say in these calls? Well, here comes the impetus behind this rant: Through a weird set of circumstances one of these people called me at the office and I learned first-hand what my clients go through before they come to me. The woman who called me did a number of things that

got me going including: promising me they would cut the tax lien in half, offering to put that guarantee in writing and giving me blatantly incorrect information about the process. When I informed her I was a tax attorney, she quickly hung up and moved on to her next victim.

So that's why I'm ranting. I'm ranting because what people like this are doing is not an honorable way to earn a living. They are preying on people who are desperate for good news and exploiting their ignorance about the process. They have no idea what is possible. They are in no position to offer legal advice. They are giving false hope and they are destroying lives by telling people who owe taxes that they can simply walk away from a big part of that debt. Heck, they will even put those guarantees in writing.

Here's the real truth: When it comes to a tax problem, the best strategy is to fix it immediately before it destroys your life and everything you hold dear. Don't let embarrassment about how you got into the situation keep you from dealing with it. And don't believe those scammers with the fake guarantees. Especially when those “guarantees” come from a boiler room. ■

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