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CHICAGO TAX PREPARER PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUD

CHICAGO, January 20, 2011 — A two-year investigation conducted by the Illinois Department of Revenue Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Attorney General Lisa Madigan resulted this week in a Chicago tax preparer pleading guilty to filing fraudulent tax returns.

Katrina McAllister pleaded guilty on Tuesday to one count of Filing a Fraudulent Illinois Income Tax Return and one count of Entering False Information on an Illinois Income Tax Return. Both crimes are class 4 felonies. McAllister was sentenced to 18 months probation and ordered to pay criminal restitution.

“With tax season upon us, those who try to cheat the state should know that we will pursue you if you fail to pay your taxes or file false information with the state,” Madigan said.

While Illinois does not require licensing for employees of large tax preparation companies, those companies are regulated by the Internal Revenue Service. Accountants and CPAs who offer tax preparation services are licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation and their license status can be checked at IDFPR.com. Lower income families can obtain free tax preparation assistance from a variety of community organizations, including the Center for Economic Progress and AARP. A list of nonprofit tax preparation services will be available on tax.illinois.gov in late February.

“Illinois taxpayers can be sure their returns are honest, accurate, and complete if they use the free Web File program found at tax.illinois.gov,” said Director Brian Hamer, Illinois Department of Revenue. “Tax preparers who cheat or assist taxpayers to cheat will be prosecuted. Our main objective is to obtain voluntary compliance, but we will not back away from aggressive criminal enforcement if it is warranted.

Prompted by a referral from a concerned taxpayer, state investigators found McAllister had fraudulently prepared and fraudulently filed several tax returns for herself as well as several other individuals. Kathleen Farrell prosecuted the case on behalf of Attorney General Madigan.

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