



For Immediate Release

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Georgia Watch releases resources for consumers and advocates to protect refunds this tax season

ATLANTA, GA, February 2, 2015 –Today, Georgia Watch released resources aimed at assisting families around Georgia in accessing free and reliable tax preparation services:

- 1) A new interactive [beta map](#) locating tax preparation services around Georgia will help families connect to free assistance, avoid the unnecessary expense of paid preparers, and keep more of their tax refunds: <http://www.georgiawatch.org/taxmap/>

The beta map features free AARP and IRS VITA tax preparation sites and includes information about making appointments, hours of operation, and more. VITA sites will complete and file tax returns for families with incomes below \$53,000. AARP sites are also free for anyone, there is no maximum income or minimum age, and you do not have to be an AARP member. **This is the first time that a comprehensive map of free and reliable tax preparation sites approved by the IRS in Georgia has been made available to the general public.** “We look forward to serving even more Georgia families this tax season by letting more consumers know about our 120 locations throughout the state by using this map” Paul S.McNulty, GA 1 AARP TaxAide Communication and Partnership Specialist.

- 1) **A guide will help Georgians choose reliable and knowledgeable tax preparers.** In a 2014 study by the Government Accountability Office, only 2 of 19 tax preparation offices prepared returns with the correct refund amount. Their errors ranged from \$52 below what the refund should have been to \$3,718 more than the correct refund.
- 2) Two fact sheets that explain how the Affordable Care Act impacts consumers during tax season either [through penalties](#) or as a result of their eligibility for [advanced premium tax credits](#) through healthcare.gov.

Georgia Watch will also hold workshops in partnership with the Cobb and DeKalb County Library Systems to educate consumers on their tax filing requirements in March.

“This tax season in particular is gearing up to be the most complicated in decades. With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and new tax filing requirements for those who either did not have insurance or gained coverage through healthcare.gov, it is essential that all consumers receive accurate information on how this will impact their refunds. **We will likely see more predatory and uninformed preparers than usual provide incorrect information this tax season as a result.**” said Elise Blasingame, Director of Community Education

Founded in 2002, Georgia Watch is a statewide consumer advocacy organization whose mission is to empower and protect Georgia consumers on matters that impact their wallets and quality of life. Through education, advocacy and policy development, Georgia Watch works to influence public policies that positively impact consumers, safeguard consumer protections in the area of personal finance, promote access to safe and affordable healthcare, encourage fair utility rates and renewable energy options, protect the right to trial by jury and promote access to the courts.