



SALT LAKE CITY

Consumer Protection

TAX PREPARATION FRAUD

Protect your tax return

Tax Preparation Fraud

When it's that time of year
and you have to do your
taxes, who do you turn to
for help?

You may think about using any one of the
businesses with a "Tax Preparation" sign in
their window. But be cautious.

**You could lose some or all of
your tax return.**

"Always
Trust,
but Verify"



What is Tax Preparation Fraud?

Tax Preparation Fraud is broad and can take many forms. Tax preparers may inflate the return you are expected to receive by filing false information. They will then charge you a percentage of that false return and leave you scrambling when the IRS confronts you.

Tax preparers can also steal your refund by changing your direct deposit information after you've signed off on your return. They may take your information when you come in for a consultation, and then without your permission file a false return in your name.

No matter what the circumstances, this predatory and deceptive behavior should not be tolerated! You can protect yourself by making cautious decisions and reporting fraud when it happens.

How to Avoid Tax Preparation Fraud

- **NEVER SIGN A BLANK OR INCOMPLETE RETURN!** You are responsible for the information that goes on your return. If you sign a return before it is filled out you could be held liable for submitting false information.
- **Do not use tax preparers who charge a percentage of your return.** Charging a percentage of your return encourages tax preparers to provide false information so it looks like you'll be getting a much larger return.
- Use a tax preparer with some form of recognized licensing such as a Certified Public Accountant. **Verify that their certification is real, current, and valid.** You can verify online at irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf
- **ALWAYS DOUBLE CHECK YOUR RETURN BEFORE YOU SIGN AND SUBMIT IT!**

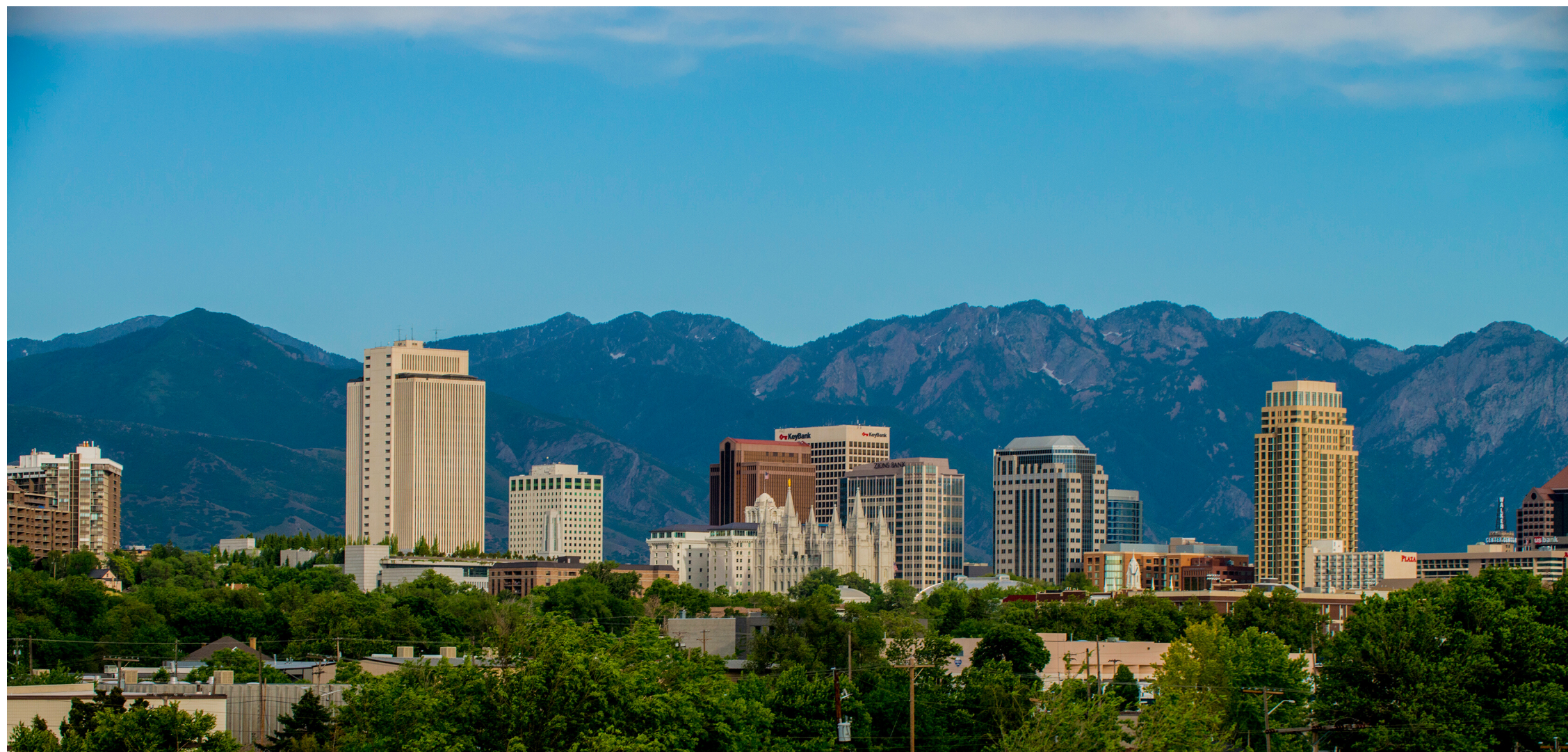
- **Look for reviews and recommendations.** You can check organization and review sites such as the Better Business Bureau to get a good idea of a tax preparers history.
- Check a tax preparers registration with the IRS. Tax preparers are not required to be licensed, but they are required to register with the IRS. If they are not registered they may have had their registration revoked due to past fraud. Ask for an IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN). **Verify it's valid.**
- If you cannot afford a certified tax preparer, such as a CPA, you may qualify for free tax preparation assistance. Find our more information about **free tax preparation** assistance by visiting [SLC.gov/ConsumerProtection/Tax](https://slc.gov/ConsumerProtection/Tax)



If you have been a victim or know a victim of tax preparation fraud

What Can You Do?

1. Seek private legal counsel.
 - a. If you cannot afford private legal counsel you may qualify for assistance by contacting Utah Legal Services at UtahLegalServices.org
2. File a complaint with your local consumer protection agency. These agencies may be able to help you.
 - a. If the fraud took place in Salt Lake City you can file a complaint at SLC.gov/ConsumerProtection
 - b. For all other cases you can file a complaint at ConsumerProtection.Utah.gov
3. Warn others that they might be at risk.
 - a. If you see something, say something! Don't let your friends and family be taken advantage of.



What is SLCCP?

Salt Lake City Consumer Protection is a local government program dedicated to the idea that Salt Lake City consumers have the right to a sense of security about the products and services they spend their hard earned money on. SLCCP is here to deter unfair, deceptive, and fraudulent business practices by exercising the municipal authorities of Salt Lake City. By doing so we hope to maintain a fair marketplace and empower consumers and businesses to support a local culture of ethical business practices.



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File a report at:

[SLC.gov/ConsumerProtection](https://slc.gov/ConsumerProtection)

Salt Lake City Consumer Protection
451 State St. - Room 145 - SLC, UT 84111
TEL: (801)535-6526
Email: ConsumerProtection@slcgov.com