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After being in operation for nearly a decade, [the IRS' Identity Protection PIN Program has been opened to all tax filers for the first time ever](#)

The voluntary program was first established to protect victims of identity theft by preventing fraudulent returns from being filed using their personal information. Now, anyone who has either a Social Security number or Individual Tax Identification Number and whose identity can be verified is eligible for the program.

According to IRS commissioner Chuck Rettig, “This is a way to, in essence, lock your tax account, and the IP PIN serves as the key to opening that account... Electronic returns that do not contain the correct IP PIN will be rejected, and paper returns will go through additional scrutiny for fraud.” Another benefit of opting-into the program: if you do become a victim of identity theft, you wouldn't need to file a Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit.

These IP PINS come in the form of a six-digit code known only to the taxpayer and the IRS. In order to opt-in to the program, visit the [IRS's IP PIN Program site](#) and use the “Get an IP PIN” tool. If you don't already have an account on IRS.gov, you'll first need to go through a rigorous identity verification process.

For people who are unable to get online, or have limited internet access, there are other options:

- People with an adjusted gross income of \$72,000 or less and a Social Security number can fill out [Form 15227, Application for an Identity Protection Personal Identification Number](#), and mail or fax it in. A phone number is required.

- Those who are unable to verify their identity online or file Form 15227 can [make an appointment](#) for an in-person meeting with a Taxpayer Assistance Center. If you choose this route, you will need a picture identification as well as another form of identification.

Before signing up, be aware:

- Pins are only valid for one calendar year,
- A new pin must be obtained each year,
- The IP PIN tool is generally unavailable mid-November through mid-January each year and,
- Spouses and dependents are eligible for an IP PIN if they can pass the identity proofing process.

“This is an easy way to ensure that your tax refund goes into your pocket, not a thief’s,” said Susan Grant, Director of Consumer Protection and Privacy at Consumer Federation of America. “Just be sure to store your PIN and any other information you’ll need to access your account someplace where you can find it but others in your house can’t.”