

News Release

CONTACT Lisa Erickson
PHONE 651-556-6397
E-MAIL lisa.erickson@state.mn.us

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Contact: Lisa Erickson
Phone: 651-556-6397
Lisa.erickson@state.mn.us

Hennepin County tax preparer charged with tax crimes

ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Revenue announced that the Hennepin County Attorney’s Office charged Rona Griffin, 51, of Minneapolis, with 53 felonies.

Griffin is charged with 52 tax-related counts, including 34 counts of preparing fraudulent tax returns, 3 counts of filing fraudulent tax returns, 7 counts of failing to file income and corporate tax returns, and 8 counts of failing to pay corporate and income taxes.

At a news conference, Commissioner Bauerly said, “Taxpayers entrust preparers with personal information and their money. They deserve fair representation, not fraud. We work to ensure everyone, including tax preparers, follows tax laws, and we take our role very seriously.”

According to the criminal complaint, Griffin owned HAH Broker, Inc., a tax preparation and bookkeeping business. She filed hundreds of tax returns for clients using fraudulent information. The most common fraud included deducting large charitable contributions her clients never made, forging donation receipts, changing her client’s occupations on their returns, and claiming fraudulent business expenses for her clients. As a result, some of her clients received larger refunds than they were entitled to while others received refunds when they owed taxes.

According to the complaint, a client confronted Griffin about a false statement she included on his tax return. She responded with, “I put that down otherwise you would not have received a refund.”

The complaint states Griffin repeatedly failed to file and pay her own income and corporate taxes. She owes the state more than \$100,000 in delinquent income and corporate taxes.

Each tax-related felony charge carries a maximum penalty of up to five years in prison and up to a \$10,000 fine. Defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Although most taxpayers comply with tax laws voluntarily, the Minnesota Department of Revenue takes enforcement action against noncompliant taxpayers to ensure tax laws are fairly administered.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has a 24-hour tip line for anyone who suspects a person or business is violating tax laws. That number is 651-297-5195, or 1-800-657-3500. Tipsters may remain anonymous and can also email the department at tax.fraud@state.mn.us. In 2014, 85 percent of the department's criminal case referrals came from citizen tips.

Taxpayers looking for help in choosing a reputable preparer can find [great tips on our website](#).

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