

The Tampa Bay area is ground zero for IRS tax fraud, and Gus has co-sponsored legislation that would improve communication between local law enforcement and the IRS in order to help curb this growing problem.

On Tuesday, the House Ways & Means Committee held a hearing to examine how identity theft contributes to tax fraud, and whether the IRS and the Social Security Administration are doing enough to protect Social Security numbers and prevent and detect false returns filed by identity thieves.

The IRS received 2.2 million fraudulent tax returns in 2011 and found that 940,000 of the returns, with \$6.5 billion in associated fraudulent refunds, involved identity theft, [according to a recent Washington Post article](#)

At the hearing, the IRS highlighted new programs and systems it has put in place to address this challenge, including implementing components of the Identity Theft and Tax Fraud Prevention Act, which Gus has co-sponsored.

The legislation also calls for minimum fines and prison sentences for those who willfully misappropriate another person's tax ID number.

[Watch the hearing online by clicking here](#) .

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