

On Tuesday, Gus gathered leaders within the tax and consumer protection industry to discuss the growing problem of tax refund fraud.

Since 2008, the IRS has identified 470,000 incidents of identity theft affecting more than 390,000 taxpayers. After reviewing only 30 percent of the 100 million returns filed this year, the IRS has already confirmed 2.6 million cases of fraud.

Last year in Hillsborough County, "Operation Rainmaker" resulted in 49 arrests, \$100 Million intercepted, and \$5 Million recovered.

"The Tampa Bay area has become ground zero for tax fraud, particularly with seniors, and the public sector must work with the private sector to curb this problem and prosecute those who steal other people's identities," Gus said.

At the roundtable, Gus heard about what is working, and what is inhibiting the ability of business leaders to help government agencies prevent tax refund fraud.

Gus has co-sponsored legislation that would stiffen penalties for violators who commit tax fraud and require the Internal Revenue Service to develop more information sharing between local law enforcement and federal officials. He is looking into additional legislation that would help curb this problem.