

(WASHINGTON)-- Congressman Allen West (R-FL) met with representatives from the Internal Revenue Service this week to discuss solutions to the growing number of taxpayer identity fraud cases in South Florida. Federal Trade Commission reports show tax-related identity fraud continues to plague the United States, most notably South Florida, where more than half of the 20,000 Florida identity fraud cases to the IRS have been detected.

"It has become too easy and far too common for criminals to obtain the taxpayer identification numbers of people and file fraudulently in their name," West said. "Today's meeting with the IRS allowed me to hear directly from the agency as to what investigators are doing to prevent this crime. I challenge the IRS to determine a more efficient system for tracking who these criminals are and how they are obtaining taxpayer identification numbers."

IRS leaders discussed with Congressman West several new systems implemented this year to identify and track fraud, including a "detection code" assigned to suspicious filings.

"I can assure you, we are getting better everyday," Jodi Patterson, Director of Return Integrity with the IRS, told Congressman West. "This is a top priority for the IRS."

Patterson also assured Congressman West the IRS is improving its system for how operators handle taxpayers who believe their identity has been stolen.

"We have spent a great deal of time training our operators on how to interact and best help expedite the reporting process," Patterson said.

West asked the IRS to report back to him at the end of April on improvements the IRS has made over last year, including a report of indicators and warnings the IRS has discovered through its investigation. West also encouraged the IRS to work with local law enforcement to better track down criminals on a local level.

"Our local law enforcement is well aware of this problem and they want to be involved," West

said. "I am confident the IRS is listening to our concerns and will continue tracking down these criminals until this problem is solved."