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March 25, 2026  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Whitewater Tax Preparer Sentenced for Felony Theft & Filing False Tax Returns Charges

**MADISON, WI** –Mauricio Castaneda, a Whitewater tax return preparer, was sentenced to a total of 4 ½ years in the Wisconsin State Prison System in Walworth County on March 6, 2026, for felony theft charges and filing false income tax returns. Castaneda was also ordered not to prepare or file tax returns for anyone but himself. Charges for five counts of filing false claims for credit were dismissed but read in.

According to the criminal complaint, Castaneda operated El Nevado Taxes in Whitewater. From February 2021 to February 2022, Castaneda filed 33 false returns and received refunds of \$33,356 to which he was not entitled. The Wisconsin Department of Revenue Office of Criminal Investigation (OCI) identified 307 additional fraudulent returns Castaneda filed, preventing \$298,300 in fraudulent refunds from being issued. Castaneda's scheme involved using clients' tax records and wage information to file fraudulent returns to personally receive refunds.

The Criminal Litigation Unit in the Wisconsin Department of Justice prosecuted the case following an investigation by the OCI, which investigates individuals and businesses suspected of committing tax crimes.

### Department of Revenue Offers Tips on Choosing a Tax Preparer

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue offers the following tips for choosing a reputable tax return preparer to help ensure personal information is secure and returns are accurate:

- Check the IRS Directory of Preparers
- Check the preparer's history with the Better Business Bureau
- Avoid preparers who base their fees on a percentage of the refund or who offer to deposit all or a portion of the refund into their financial accounts
- Be wary of preparers who claim they can get larger refunds than others
- Ask if they plan to use e-file
- Make sure the preparer is available to answer questions after the return is prepared
- Ensure the preparer signs and includes their Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN)
- Check their credentials. Only attorneys, CPAs and enrolled agents can represent the IRS in tax matters. Other preparers who participate in the IRS Annual Filing Season Program have limited practice rights to represent taxpayers during audits of returns they prepared.

To report tax fraud to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, visit [www.revenue.wi.gov](http://www.revenue.wi.gov) and click the "Report tax fraud" link under Quick Links.

