

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
*THE WATSONVILLE LAW CENTER*  
*[March, 2010]*



Every year, local families lose thousands of dollars during tax season, not to theft or fraud, but to high-cost tax refund loans!

The fastest way to get your return is for you or your tax preparer to file electronically and have your return deposited automatically into your own bank account. That's the cheapest, fastest, and easiest way to keep all of your tax refund.

If you are offered your tax refund immediately, it's probably a loan. Fees and interest will be deducted from your refund -- huge interest-- 200% interest or more. Watch out for "service" and "processing" fees on "instant" tax refunds. The truth is, you'll be paying a lot to get an "instant" refund when you can collect your whole tax return just a few days later.

Here are a few things you can do to protect your refund:

1. Don't pay to borrow your own tax refund. Don't waste your money on an "instant" refund just to get it a few days sooner. When you receive your entire tax refund, you'll be happy that you waited.
2. File your taxes early, file your taxes electronically, and have your return deposited directly to your own bank account.
3. If you don't have your own bank account, open one. You'll receive your refund faster if you have it directly deposited to your account and you can avoid the fee to cash your refund check.
4. You may be able to get free help filing your taxes through a local program, such as:
  - Santa Cruz Credit Union at (831) 460-2359
  - Project SCOUT at (877) 373-8297
  - Volunteer Center of Monterey at (831)-757-3206