

Do You Owe Back Taxes?

The government might deny you a passport

by Sarah Elizabeth Adler, [AARP](#), July 11, 2018|Comments: 2



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Taxpayers owing back taxes to the federal government could be at risk of being denied new passports.

[En español](#) | Pay your taxes or risk your passport. That's the message the IRS is sending to some 362,000 Americans who owe the federal government more than \$51,000.

The IRS confirmed to AARP on Wednesday that it is notifying affected individuals in the United States and abroad that they are at risk of being denied new or renewed passports if they don't pay.

A 2015 law directs the IRS and State Department to deny or revoke passports for taxpayers with more than \$51,000 of federal tax debt, adjusted for inflation.

IRS spokesperson Eric Smith said that, as of late June, 220 people had paid their debts in full — \$11.5 million altogether — while 1,400 others had signed installment agreements.

Smith said U.S. authorities are currently denying applications for new or renewed passports but are not revoking existing passports, meaning affected individuals with current passports should still be able to travel abroad but won't be eligible for passport renewal until their debts are settled.

"You can do something about it even if you haven't gotten a letter yet — don't wait," Smith said. "Contact us about doing something."

Not all debtors are subject to these restrictions. Among those not affected are individuals who have pending or current [installment payment agreements](#) with the IRS and those contesting their debt in court. Taxpayers who are victims of identity theft, who are in bankruptcy and whose debts have been deemed not collectible due to hardship are also excluded, among others. A full list of exclusions can be found on the IRS [website](#).