

Undocumented Workers in Georgia Prepare to File Taxes

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Midnight on Tuesday is the deadline for filing your state and federal income taxes and a portion of Georgia's taxpayers are undocumented workers.

It's hard to say exactly how many of the state's workers are illegal.

Workers who don't have social security numbers can still file a tax return, using a nine-digit Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, or I-TIN. The Georgia Department of Revenue doesn't know how many people with ITINs are here illegally. But the Immigration Policy Center says in 2010, undocumented workers in Georgia paid more than \$85,000,000 in income taxes.

Grace Williams is an Atlanta accountant who filed some of those returns. She says there are two reasons why undocumented workers file tax returns. Some want a refund. But Wilson says those who owe hope paying their taxes will lead to bigger things.

"A lot of people in the community are telling them that that's the responsible thing to do," Williams says, "And if they aspire to become legal one day, the first thing that they're going to look at is, 'Did you do your taxes?'" she says.

Williams says those workers hope to become U.S. citizens. But DA King, president of the Dustin Inman Society, which advocates enforcement of immigration laws, says that's not the real motivation.

"They are getting a refund on the Additional Child Tax Credit," King says, "Refund is not the right word. They're getting a rebate from the government for having U.S.-born children," he says.

King calls the segment of undocumented workers who pay taxes "microscopic." He points to the Center for Immigration Studies. The group doesn't have Georgia-specific numbers, but nationally, they say illegal immigrants who file tax returns receive billions more in refunds than they pay in taxes.

So, what's next? It's hard to say. Immigrants' rights groups advocate a path to citizenship, while opponents want tougher enforcement.

WABE reached out to Senate Majority Leader Chip Rogers, who has authored major immigration legislation in Georgia. Rogers declined to be interviewed for this story.

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