

These provisions apply to all Department staff with access to IRS information.

IRC SEC. 7431 CIVIL DAMAGES FOR UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURE OF RETURNS AND RETURN INFORMATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.-

- (1) INSPECTION OR DISCLOSURE BY EMPLOYEE OF UNITED STATES.-If any officer or employee of the United States knowingly, or by reason of negligence, inspects or discloses any return or return information with respect to a taxpayer in violation of any provision of section 6103, such taxpayer may bring a civil action for damages against the United States in a district court of the United States.
- (2) INSPECTION OR DISCLOSURE BY A PERSON WHO IS NOT AN EMPLOYEE OF UNITED STATES.-If any person who is not an officer or employee of the United States knowingly, or by reason of negligence, inspects or discloses any return or return information with respect to a taxpayer in violation of any provision of section 6103, such taxpayer may bring a civil action for damages against such person in a district court of the United States.

(b) EXCEPTIONS.-No liability shall arise under this section with respect to any inspection or disclosure -

- (1) which results from good faith, but erroneous, interpretation of section 6103, or
- (2) which is requested by the taxpayer.

(c) DAMAGES.-In any action brought under subsection (a), upon a finding of liability on the part of the defendant, the defendant shall be liable to the plaintiff in an amount equal to the sum of-

- (1) the greater of-
 - (A) \$1,000 for each act of unauthorized inspection or disclosure of a return or return information with respect to which such defendant is found liable, or
 - (B) the sum of-
 - (i) the actual damages sustained by the plaintiff as a result of such unauthorized inspection or disclosure, plus
 - (ii) in the case of a willful inspection or disclosure or an inspection or disclosure which is the result of gross negligence, punitive damages, plus

- (2) the cost of the action.

(d) PERIOD FOR BRINGING ACTION.-Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an action to enforce any liability created under this section may be brought, without regard to the amount in controversy, at any time within 2 years after the date of discovery by the plaintiff of the unauthorized inspection or disclosure.