



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

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PEORIA TAX RETURN PREPARER SENTENCED FOR PREPARING FALSE TAX RETURNS

Lawful Permanent Resident from Mexico will face deportation at the completion of her sentence

PHOENIX - Maria Orona, 47, a Lawful Permanent Resident from Mexico living in Peoria, Ariz., was sentenced here today to two years in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Roslyn O. Silver. Orona will also face deportation to Mexico after her sentence is completed. Orona was indicted in April 2008 on 14 counts of Aiding and Assisting in the Presentation of False and Fraudulent Individual Income Tax Returns. She pleaded guilty on August 27, 2008 to one count of the indictment.

Orona owned and operated Esperanza Tax Service and prepared the fraudulent returns herself in 2004, 2005 and 2006, charging between \$65 and \$100. Between March 21, 2006 and April 4, 2006 the Criminal Investigation unit of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) conducted three separate undercover operations in which IRS agents posed as clients in order to have Orona prepare their Federal Income Tax Returns. In each undercover contact, Orona prepared tax returns in which she falsely reduced the tax due. These undercover contacts resulted in false returns being prepared that collectively claimed a total of approximately \$44,853 in false expenses and a reduced tax liability of approximately \$3,406. The undercover agents did not provide Orona with any indication that they had incurred any of the false deductions that were placed upon the completed income tax returns.

The IRS Examination Division then initiated audits on approximately 200 tax returns prepared by Orona. The IRS determined most of the returns contained overstated itemized deductions and other false items that reduced the tax liabilities resulting in an additional tax due and owing on the 200 returns of approximately \$283,242.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted Special Agents of the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division. The prosecution was handled by Peter Sexton, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-00262-PHX-ROS
RELEASE NUMBER: 2008-286(Orona)

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