

RCW 82.32.330 Disclosure of return or tax information. (1) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Disclose" means to make known to any person in any manner whatever a return or tax information;

(b) "Return" means a tax or information return or claim for refund required by, or provided for or permitted under, the laws of this state which is filed with the department of revenue by, on behalf of, or with respect to a person, and any amendment or supplement thereto, including supporting schedules, attachments, or lists that are supplemental to, or part of, the return so filed;

(c) "Tax information" means (i) a taxpayer's identity, (ii) the nature, source, or amount of the taxpayer's income, payments, receipts, deductions, exemptions, credits, assets, liabilities, net worth, tax liability deficiencies, overassessments, or tax payments, whether taken from the taxpayer's books and records or any other source, (iii) whether the taxpayer's return was, is being, or will be examined or subject to other investigation or processing, (iv) a part of a written determination that is not designated as a precedent and disclosed pursuant to RCW 82.32.410, or a background file document relating to a written determination, and (v) other data received by, recorded by, prepared by, furnished to, or collected by the department of revenue with respect to the determination of the existence, or possible existence, of liability, or the amount thereof, of a person under the laws of this state for a tax, penalty, interest, fine, forfeiture, or other imposition, or offense. However, data, material, or documents that do not disclose information related to a specific or identifiable taxpayer do not constitute tax information under this section. Except as provided by RCW 82.32.410, nothing in this chapter requires any person possessing data, material, or documents made confidential and privileged by this section to delete information from such data, material, or documents so as to permit its disclosure;

(d) "State agency" means every Washington state office, department, division, bureau, board, commission, or other state agency;

(e) "Taxpayer identity" means the taxpayer's name, address, telephone number, registration number, or any combination thereof, or any other information disclosing the identity of the taxpayer; and

(f) "Department" means the department of revenue or its officer, agent, employee, or representative.

(2) Returns and tax information are confidential and privileged, and except as authorized by this section, neither the department of revenue nor any other person may disclose any return or tax information.

(3) This section does not prohibit the department of revenue from:

(a) Disclosing such return or tax information in a civil or criminal judicial proceeding or an administrative proceeding:

(i) In respect of any tax imposed under the laws of this state if the taxpayer or its officer or other person liable under this title or chapter 83.100 RCW is a party in the proceeding;

(ii) In which the taxpayer about whom such return or tax information is sought and another state agency are adverse parties in the proceeding; or

(iii) Brought by the department under RCW 18.27.040 or 19.28.071;

(b) Disclosing, subject to such requirements and conditions as the director prescribes by rules adopted pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW, such return or tax information regarding a taxpayer to such

taxpayer or to such person or persons as that taxpayer may designate in a request for, or consent to, such disclosure, or to any other person, at the taxpayer's request, to the extent necessary to comply with a request for information or assistance made by the taxpayer to such other person. However, tax information not received from the taxpayer must not be so disclosed if the director determines that such disclosure would compromise any investigation or litigation by any federal, state, or local government agency in connection with the civil or criminal liability of the taxpayer or another person, or that such disclosure would identify a confidential informant, or that such disclosure is contrary to any agreement entered into by the department that provides for the reciprocal exchange of information with other government agencies which agreement requires confidentiality with respect to such information unless such information is required to be disclosed to the taxpayer by the order of any court;

(c) Disclosing the name of a taxpayer against whom a warrant under RCW 82.32.210 has been either issued or filed and remains outstanding for a period of at least ten working days. The department is not required to disclose any information under this subsection if a taxpayer has entered a deferred payment arrangement with the department for the payment of a warrant that has not been filed and is making payments upon such deficiency that will fully satisfy the indebtedness within twelve months;

(d) Publishing statistics so classified as to prevent the identification of particular returns or reports or items thereof;

(e) Disclosing such return or tax information, for official purposes only, to the governor or attorney general, or to any state agency, or to any committee or subcommittee of the legislature dealing with matters of taxation, revenue, trade, commerce, the control of industry or the professions;

(f) Permitting the department of revenue's records to be audited and examined by the proper state officer, his or her agents and employees;

(g) Disclosing any such return or tax information to a peace officer as defined in RCW 9A.04.110 or county prosecuting attorney, for official purposes. The disclosure may be made only in response to a search warrant, subpoena, or other court order, unless the disclosure is for the purpose of criminal tax enforcement. A peace officer or county prosecuting attorney who receives the return or tax information may disclose that return or tax information only for use in the investigation and a related court proceeding, or in the court proceeding for which the return or tax information originally was sought;

(h) Disclosing any such return or tax information to the proper officer of the internal revenue service of the United States, the Canadian government or provincial governments of Canada, or to the proper officer of the tax department of any state or city or town or county, for official purposes, but only if the statutes of the United States, Canada or its provincial governments, or of such other state or city or town or county, as the case may be, grants substantially similar privileges to the proper officers of this state;

(i) Disclosing any such return or tax information to the United States department of justice, including the bureau of alcohol, tobacco, firearms and explosives, the department of defense, the immigration and customs enforcement and the customs and border protection agencies of the United States department of homeland security, the United States coast guard, the alcohol and tobacco tax

and trade bureau of the United States department of treasury, and the United States department of transportation, or any authorized representative of these federal agencies, for official purposes;

(j) Publishing or otherwise disclosing the text of a written determination designated by the director as a precedent pursuant to RCW 82.32.410;

(k) Disclosing, in a manner that is not associated with other tax information, the taxpayer name, entity type, business address, mailing address, revenue tax registration numbers, reseller permit numbers and the expiration date and status of such permits, North American industry classification system or standard industrial classification code of a taxpayer, and the dates of opening and closing of business. This subsection may not be construed as giving authority to the department to give, sell, or provide access to any list of taxpayers for any commercial purpose;

(l) Disclosing such return or tax information that is also maintained by another Washington state or local governmental agency as a public record available for inspection and copying under the provisions of chapter 42.56 RCW or is maintained by a court of record and is not otherwise prohibited from disclosure;

(m) Disclosing such return or tax information to the United States department of agriculture for the limited purpose of investigating food stamp fraud by retailers;

(n) Disclosing to a financial institution, escrow company, or title company, in connection with specific real property that is the subject of a real estate transaction, current amounts due the department for a filed tax warrant, judgment, or lien against the real property;

(o) Disclosing to a person against whom the department has asserted liability as a successor under RCW 82.32.140 return or tax information pertaining to the specific business of the taxpayer to which the person has succeeded;

(p) Disclosing real estate excise tax affidavit forms filed under RCW 82.45.150 in the possession of the department, including real estate excise tax affidavit forms for transactions exempt or otherwise not subject to tax;

(q) Disclosing to local taxing jurisdictions the identity of sellers granted relief under RCW 82.32.430(5)(b)(i) and the period for which relief is granted;

(r) Disclosing such return or tax information to the court in respect to the department's application for a subpoena under RCW 82.32.117;

(s) Disclosing to a person against whom the department has asserted liability under RCW 83.100.120 return or tax information pertaining to that person's liability for tax under chapter 83.100 RCW;

(t) Disclosing such return or tax information to the streamlined sales tax governing board, member states of the streamlined sales tax governing board, or authorized representatives of such board or states, for the limited purposes of:

(i) Conducting on behalf of member states sales and use tax audits of taxpayers; or

(ii) Auditing certified service providers or certified automated systems providers;

(u) Disclosing any such return or tax information when the disclosure is specifically authorized under any other section of the Revised Code of Washington;

(v) Disclosing to an individual to whom the department has issued an assessment under RCW 82.32.145 for unpaid trust fund taxes of a defunct or insolvent entity, return or tax information of that entity pertaining to those unpaid trust fund taxes;

(w) Disclosing any such return or tax information pursuant to a federal grand jury subpoena or subpoena issued by a United States attorney, only to be used in the criminal investigation and related court proceedings, or in the court proceeding for which the return or tax information originally was sought; or

(x) Disclosing any return or tax information to an individual when the return or tax information is related directly to that person's individual liability, as part of a marital community, for amounts due under a warrant issued under the authority of RCW 59.30.090 or 82.32.210.

(4) (a) The department may disclose return or taxpayer information to a person under investigation or during any court or administrative proceeding against a person under investigation as provided in this subsection (4). The disclosure must be in connection with the department's official duties relating to an audit, collection activity, or a civil or criminal investigation. The disclosure may occur only when the person under investigation and the person in possession of data, materials, or documents are parties to the return or tax information to be disclosed. The department may disclose return or tax information such as invoices, contracts, bills, statements, resale or exemption certificates, or checks. However, the department may not disclose general ledgers, sales or cash receipt journals, check registers, accounts receivable/payable ledgers, general journals, financial statements, expert's workpapers, income tax returns, state tax returns, tax return workpapers, or other similar data, materials, or documents.

(b) Before disclosure of any tax return or tax information under this subsection (4), the department must, through written correspondence, inform the person in possession of the data, materials, or documents to be disclosed. The correspondence must clearly identify the data, materials, or documents to be disclosed. The department may not disclose any tax return or tax information under this subsection (4) until the time period allowed in (c) of this subsection has expired or until the court has ruled on any challenge brought under (c) of this subsection.

(c) The person in possession of the data, materials, or documents to be disclosed by the department has twenty days from the receipt of the written request required under (b) of this subsection to petition the superior court of the county in which the petitioner resides for injunctive relief. The court must limit or deny the request of the department if the court determines that:

(i) The data, materials, or documents sought for disclosure are cumulative or duplicative, or are obtainable from some other source that is more convenient, less burdensome, or less expensive;

(ii) The production of the data, materials, or documents sought would be unduly burdensome or expensive, taking into account the needs of the department, the amount in controversy, limitations on the petitioner's resources, and the importance of the issues at stake; or

(iii) The data, materials, or documents sought for disclosure contain trade secret information that, if disclosed, could harm the petitioner.

(d) The department must reimburse reasonable expenses for the production of data, materials, or documents incurred by the person in possession of the data, materials, or documents to be disclosed.

(e) Requesting information under (b) of this subsection that may indicate that a taxpayer is under investigation does not constitute a disclosure of tax return or tax information under this section.

(5) Service of a subpoena issued under RCW 82.32.117 does not constitute a disclosure of return or tax information under this section. Notwithstanding anything else to the contrary in this section, a person served with a subpoena under RCW 82.32.117 may disclose the existence or content of the subpoena to that person's legal counsel.

(6) Any person acquiring knowledge of any return or tax information in the course of his or her employment with the department of revenue and any person acquiring knowledge of any return or tax information as provided under subsection (3) (e), (f), (g), (h), (i), (m), (v), and (w) of this section, who discloses any such return or tax information to another person not entitled to knowledge of such return or tax information under the provisions of this section, is guilty of a misdemeanor. If the person guilty of such violation is an officer or employee of the state, such person must forfeit such office or employment and is incapable of holding any public office or employment in this state for a period of two years thereafter. [2022 c 56 s 9; 2021 c 145 s 18; 2011 c 174 s 404. Prior: 2010 c 112 s 13; 2010 c 106 s 104; prior: 2009 c 563 s 213; 2009 c 309 s 2; 2008 c 81 s 11; 2007 c 6 s 1502; 2006 c 177 s 7; prior: 2005 c 326 s 1; 2005 c 274 s 361; prior: 2000 c 173 s 1; 2000 c 106 s 1; 1998 c 234 s 1; 1996 c 184 s 5; 1995 c 197 s 1; 1991 c 330 s 1; 1990 c 67 s 1; 1985 c 414 s 9; 1984 c 138 s 12; 1969 ex.s. c 104 s 1; 1963 ex.s. c 28 s 10; 1961 c 15 s 82.32.330; prior: 1943 c 156 s 12; 1935 c 180 s 210; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 8370-210.]

Retroactive application—2010 c 112: See note following RCW 82.32.780.

Application—2010 c 106 ss 104 and 111: "Sections 104(3) (a)(i) and (s) and 111 of this act apply to return or tax information in respect to the tax imposed under chapter 83.100 RCW in the possession of the department of revenue on or after July 1, 2010." [2010 c 106 s 403.]

Effective date—2010 c 106: See note following RCW 35.102.145.

Finding—Intent—Construction—Effective date—Reports and recommendations—2009 c 563: See notes following RCW 82.32.780.

Findings—Savings—Effective date—2008 c 81: See notes following RCW 82.08.975.

Part headings not law—Savings—Effective date—Severability—2007 c 6: See notes following RCW 82.32.020.

Findings—Intent—2007 c 6: See note following RCW 82.14.390.

Effective date—2006 c 177 ss 1-9: See note following RCW 82.04.250.

Effective date—2000 c 173: "This act takes effect July 1, 2000."
[2000 c 173 s 2.]

Effective date—2000 c 106: "This act takes effect July 1, 2000."
[2000 c 106 s 13.]

Effective date—1996 c 184: See note following RCW 46.16A.030.

Effective date—1995 c 197: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect July 1, 1995." [1995 c 197 s 2.]