

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
v.)	Civil No. 9:14-cv-81199
)	
WILFRID ANTOINE, individually and)	
d/b/a LBS TAX SERVICES and AWA)	
TAX, INC.,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

COMPLAINT FOR PERMANENT INJUNCTION AND OTHER RELIEF

The United States of America, for its complaint against Wilfrid Antoine, individually and doing business as LBS Tax Services and AWA Tax, Inc., alleges as follows:

1. This is a civil action brought by the United States under I.R.C. (26 U.S.C.) §§ 7402, 7407, and 7408 to enjoin Antoine, and anyone in active concert or participation with him, from:

- (1) acting as a federal tax return preparer or requesting, assisting in, or directing the preparation or filing of federal tax returns, amended returns, or other related documents or forms for any person or entity other than himself;
- (2) preparing or assisting in preparing federal tax returns that he knows or reasonably should know would result in an understatement of tax liability or the overstatement of federal tax refund(s) as penalized by I.R.C. § 6694;
- (3) owning, operating, managing, working in, controlling, licensing, consulting with, or franchising a tax return preparation business;
- (4) training, instructing, teaching, and creating or providing cheat sheets, memoranda, directions, instructions, or manuals, pertaining to the preparation of federal tax returns;

- (5) engaging in any other activity subject to penalty under I.R.C. §§ 6694, 6695, 6701, or any other penalty provision in the I.R.C.; and
- (6) engaging in any conduct that substantially interferes with the proper administration and enforcement of the internal revenue laws.

This action also seeks, under I.R.C. § 7402, an order requiring Antoine to disgorge to the United States the proceeds that Antoine and his businesses received for the preparation of federal tax returns that make false or fraudulent claims.

Jurisdiction and Venue

2. This action has been requested by the Chief Counsel of the Internal Revenue Service, a delegate of the Secretary of the Treasury, and commenced at the direction of a delegate of the Attorney General, pursuant to I.R.C. §§ 7402, 7407, and 7408.

3. Jurisdiction is conferred on this Court by 28 U.S.C. §§ 1340 and 1345 and I.R.C. § 7402.

4. Venue is proper in this Court under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(1) because the Defendant resides in this district and all or a substantial portion of the activities occurred within this district.

Defendant

5. Wilfrid Antoine resides in Lake Worth, Florida. Antoine is a franchisee of LBS Tax Services and the sole owner of AWA Tax, Inc., a corporation registered in the State of Florida. Through AWA Tax, Inc., Antoine owned and operated 7 tax return preparation stores in Florida that did business under the name LBS Tax Services in 2013. In 2014, Antoine's stores began doing business under the name AWA Tax Services.

6. LBS Tax Services is a tax return preparation business that Walner G. Gachette franchises through Loan Buy Sell, Inc., a corporation organized in the State of Florida. In 2013, there were at least 239 LBS Tax Services stores in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South

Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. LBS Tax Services franchise stores prepared over 55,000 federal income tax returns in 2013.

7. This lawsuit is one of several being filed simultaneously against the LBS franchisor and LBS Tax Services franchisees, managers, and preparers (and/or former LBS Tax Services franchisees, managers, and preparers operating under new business names) seeking injunctive relief under the Internal Revenue Code. The other cases filed on this date are: *United States v. Walner G. Gachette*, 6:14-cv-1539 (M.D. Fla.); *United States v. Douglas Mesadieu*, Case No. 6:14-cv-1538 (M.D. Fla.); *United States v. Jean R. Demesmin, et al.*, Case No. 6:14-cv-1537 (M.D. Fla.); *United States v. Kerny Pierre-Louis, et al.*, Case No. 6:14-cv-1536 (M.D. Fla.); *United States v. Demetrius Scott*, Case No. 6:14-cv-1535 (M.D. Fla.); *United States v. Jason Stinson*, Case No. 6:14-cv-1534 (M.D. Fla.); and *United States v. Jacqueline Nunez*, Case No. 1:14-cv-23512 (S.D. Fla.).

LBS Tax Services' Business Structure

8. LBS Tax Services ("LBS") began in 2008 as a tax return preparation business in Orlando operated by Walner Gachette. In 2011, Gachette began franchising the LBS name to his employees to broaden his revenue base.

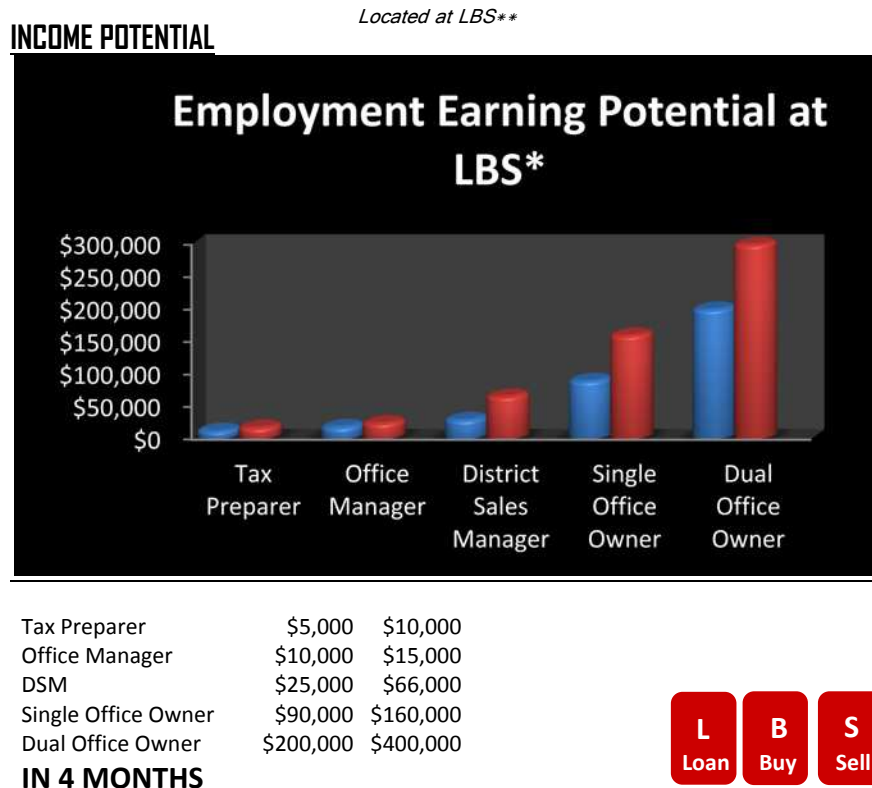
9. Antoine began working as a District Sales Manager at LBS in 2011. In 2013, Antoine became an LBS franchisee and owned 7 LBS stores. In 2014, Antoine (or his employees) notified his previous customers that his LBS stores now operated under the name AWA Tax Services.

10. LBS's stated goal is to have 1,000 tax return preparation stores by 2016.

11. Each of Antoine's individual LBS stores is managed by a District Sales Manager who works for Antoine. DSMs, in turn, oversee office managers, tax return preparers, and marketers (employees whose sole job is to solicit customers).

12. LBS lures prospective employees with promises of wealth and possible rapid advancement to franchisee level. One recruiting advertisement for LBS uses a graph to show that for 4 months of work, LBS employees have the following earning potentials:

On-Site job training / Rapid advancement opportunity / Complimentary company cell phone while employed / Most be self-motivated/ Will be IRS certified



13. The DSMs and the tax return preparers that Antoine employs are not required to have any tax return preparation experience, knowledge of federal tax laws or accounting, or

minimum education. Rather, the focus is on finding potential employees who have “customer service” experience.

14. According to LBS, an LBS tax preparer’s job is “60% outside marketing and 40% tax filing.” LBS’s emphasis on marketing, rather than tax return preparation, is apparent.

15. Franchisees sign (or are supposed to sign) a franchise agreement, titled a “General Independent Contractor Agreement,” with Loan Buy Sell, Inc. that defines the relationship between the parties. The agreement requires Antoine to pay Gachette a \$5,000 franchising fee and \$5,000 marketing fee for every LBS store he owns, and \$50 “or more” in “service bureau” and “LBS transmittal” fees for each tax return filed. The terms disguise the nature of these fees from customers – there is no “service bureau,” nor is there any “transmittal” cost. In 2013, these two fees totaled \$74 for each tax return filed.

16. Essentially, the \$5,000 franchise fee is for “buying” a zip code from LBS, as Gachette limits LBS to two stores per zip code. Gachette recommends zip codes to franchisees where he believes new LBS stores should be opened based on demographic studies. LBS seeks to have most, if not all, of its offices in areas with lower income taxpayers.

17. Franchisees, including Antoine, are required to use (and pay for) the LBS advertising and marketing created by Gachette. Franchisees select a marketing package that may include, among other things, business cards, flyers, and yard signs.

18. Antoine and his District Sales Managers enter into contracts, similar to the franchise agreements described above. Loan Buy Sell, Inc. is also a party to these contracts. The contract provides that payments are made to the DSM based on the number of customers at the DSM’s store; the more customers that a store secures, the greater the financial benefit to the DSM, including a \$3,000 bonus if the store secures more than 500 customers. DSMs are also

required to pay a fee, varying from \$2,500 to \$15,000 or more. The fee amount that a DSM contributes is dependent on LBS's classification of the DSM as a 15 percent, 25 percent, 70 percent, or other percentage stakeholder in the store that the DSM manages. The DSM's stake in his or her LBS store increases each year as steps towards becoming a franchisee.

19. Antoine and LBS emphasize the volume of tax returns as opposed to the accuracy. For example, the contract between Antoine and DSMs provides that a DSM can be fired if by **January 18** the projected number of fees generated by tax returns to be filed by the DSM's store is less than \$35,000. The number is projected because the IRS does not allow returns to be filed until after this date - the IRS began accepting 2012 tax returns on January 30, 2013. In other words, before tax return filing is even permitted, DSMs are supposed to have solicited a sufficient number of customers to generate \$35,000 in fees.

20. Antoine's DSMs, in turn, hire tax return preparers and enter into employment agreements with the preparers that set forth, among other things, compensation and a two-year non-compete agreement. Antoine's DSMs are purportedly required to train their tax return preparers based on the purported training that the DSMs received from Antoine and in Orlando from LBS.

21. Antoine and LBS franchisees use tax return preparation software selected by Gachette which automatically deducts the customers' tax return preparation fees from customers' tax refunds. By mandating that LBS's fees be deducted from refunds rather than requiring payment when the tax return is prepared, Gachette effectively requires that LBS prepares tax returns for customers that result in the customer receiving a tax refund, even in instances where legally the customer is not due a refund.

LBS Tax Services' "Training" and Lack of Quality Control

22. LBS does not provide any substantive tax law training. Gachette and other LBS-affiliated individuals provide week-long training to LBS franchisees and DSMs annually at an LBS facility in Orlando. This training focuses on LBS policies, particularly how to market to potential customers and solicit business, how to manage employees, and how to use the tax return preparation software.

23. Gachette holds frequent meetings and conference calls with franchisees, including Antoine, and DSMs. These meetings or calls may discuss, among other things, LBS policies, fees, and marketing. Gachette also provides copies of LBS's training and policy materials to franchisees and DSMs who attend these meetings, in addition to having franchisees and DSMs give presentations. Gachette emails (or directs his assistants to email) the LBS training and policy materials to franchisees and DSMs to ensure that anyone who does not participate in the in-person training or other meetings in Orlando has access to his training materials and copies of LBS's policies.

24. Antoine and his DSMs train the tax return preparers employed at his individual LBS stores. This training focuses on marketing and data entry to prepare tax returns and how to charge related fees to customers in accordance with LBS's policies.

25. Gachette, Antoine, and LBS actually train DSMs and tax return preparers how to prepare tax returns fraudulently in order to falsely and improperly maximize customers' tax refunds. Antoine's DSMs and tax return preparers are specifically trained to increase the tax return preparation fees charged to LBS customers as they increase the customers' bogus refunds.

26. Antoine provides instruction sheets to his DSMs and tax return preparers that direct the preparers to input specific information into the tax preparation software to create the maximum bogus refund for customers. LBS preparers follow the instruction sheet to report

customers' income within a specific range on their tax returns, even if the customers' actual income and circumstances (married, having dependents) that they provide to the preparer conflicts with what the preparer inputs into the software. By following these instruction sheets, LBS generates bogus refunds that customers are not entitled to. One such instruction sheet, frequently taped to the preparer's desk or on a wall next to the preparer's computer, indicated which boxes to check on the Earned Income Tax Credit checklist (IRS Form 8867) in order to make it appear as though the preparer complied with the "due diligence" requirements (discussed in more detail below) necessary to claim the credit (regardless of the information provided by customers and whether the customers actually qualify for the credit).

27. One LBS instruction sheet is brazenly captioned "Magic numbers." Preparers follow the instruction sheet, fabricating deductions on a Form 1040 Schedule A or creating bogus income or expenses on a Form 1040 Schedule C. The magic numbers sheet identifies the magic numbers as "16000-18000," and states that "anything lower then this you try to add income to get as close as possible" and "anything higher then this you try to take away income to get as close as possible."¹ The magic numbers sheet includes an example, for a customer who earned \$3,000 in wages, instructing the LBS tax preparer in such a situation to "input an income of 10000 on sch c" in order to falsely report the customer's income as \$13,000. The sheet also instructs the preparer to report unemployment income as Form W-2 wages. A similar LBS instruction sheet includes the following: "**Magic range 16,000 to 18,000**"; "If made less than 10,000 **goal is to increase income so client to get more money** (add forms to get them more money) add Schc"; "**Made more than 24,000 you have to take income out so that you can get**

¹ All quotations in this Complaint are copied exactly as they appear on the source document, including any spelling, punctuation, typographical, or grammatical errors.

client more money. (add deductions) 2106, SchA.” (emphasis added.) The purpose of manipulating a customer’s income in this manner is to falsely increase the amount of the Earned Income Tax Credit.

28. LBS franchisee Douglas Mesadieu, when deposed by the City of Orlando on August 26, 2013, testified that the “magic numbers would be how you can get – it’s numbers where you can get the most amount for your client... [W]orking with numbers every day, you will know how to get your clients the max, you know how to get the least.” Mesadieu further testified about “pushing numbers” to avoid detection from the IRS:

A lot of when I spoke about pushing numbers, you don’t want to be in the sweet spot every time. You don’t want to – because that’s a – basically, I mean, that’s a red flag. You cannot be in a sweet spot every time, so you know – you’re aware of your sweet spot, and you don’t want to put a return where your client is getting the max every time because it would implement (sic) that you have a pattern. It would implement that something is wrong. Sweet spot is just for people to actually know and understand what not to do on certain circumstances, or what they can do on other circumstances.

29. Antoine also provides scripts directing his employees on how to interact with customers and potential customers. One script informs customers that they will be receiving a refund, although not all customers legally qualify for a refund:

SCRIPT:

There are three things that I am going to do for you today

- 1. I’m going to enter you information into the system**
- 2. I will tell you how much your refund will be and**
- 3. I will look for more forms and ways to get you more money legally, ok?**

30. Antoine and LBS fail to teach Antoine’s DSMs and tax return preparers crucial elements related to basic tax return preparation. For example, they provide no genuine

instruction on the legal requirements to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit and the related due diligence requirements, procedures for detecting fraudulent Forms W-2, and the methods to question customers who provide suspicious, false, or fraudulent information. To the contrary, Antoine and LBS affirmatively instruct Antoine's DSMs and preparers on how to prepare returns that improperly claims bogus refunds based on false claims, credits, and deductions and to maximize the fees extracted from those refunds.

31. Gachette and LBS franchisees (including Antoine) and employees give presentations to DSMs at the training in Orlando. DSMs are shown a power point presentation titled "Top 10 Things District Sales Managers Need to Know." The top ten list does not include any training on tax law. The power point focuses on marketing, hiring employees, interacting with customers (including selling tax return preparation to "hesitant" customers through scripts and "rebuttals"), how to maintain and organize files, and what to wear and not wear in the office.

32. The scripts to talk to customers are the primary focus of the training provided to LBS employees. Antoine requires his employees to memorize the scripts to solicit customers face-to-face and over the phone, and when preparing tax returns and attempting to coerce customers to agree to the inclusion of additional (and improper/false) IRS forms with, and bogus claims on, their tax returns. The purpose of these scripts is to solicit customers and, once those customers have come in the door, to run up the tax return preparation fees by attaching forms to the return at an additional charge to the customer. LBS includes bogus claims, credits, and deductions on these forms to generate a higher refund for the customer, and uses this higher refund to justify its additional tax return preparation fees.

33. As part of the training session, LBS gives its DSMs a "test." Antoine and other LBS franchisees are supposed to give the "test" to DSMs who cannot attend the training. The

majority of the “test” and training is dedicated to marketing and soliciting business. The “test” also addresses LBS policies, such as how to maintain customer files and the fact that LBS’s tax return season “begins on December 26th.”

34. The training questions in the LBS “test” focus on data entry in the Drake software (the provider of the tax return preparation software that LBS licenses and uses to prepare LBS customers’ tax returns) and, in particular, how to input information on the forms that will generate the maximum (and bogus) refund for customers.

35. To the extent that the test addresses tax return preparation, the questions are very basic and, not surprisingly, the acceptable answers are not thorough and, occasionally, entirely incorrect.

36. The LBS “test” lists “Identification, Social Security Card, W-2, 1099” as the documents that a customer is purportedly required to provide to have their tax return prepared.

37. Antoine’s DSMs, in turn, are purportedly required to train the tax return preparers at their stores. However, the training slides in the top ten list power point presentation only pertain to marketing and Drake software. For example, the first slide regarding training, captioned “How to Train,” discusses teaching the “Appointment setting ‘on-the-spot’ script,” “Telephone script,” and “Presentation script” to employees. There is no instruction on how to convey to employees even basic tax law concepts, how to explain IRS forms such as a 1040, or how to train tax return preparers to actually prepare tax returns.

38. Antoine and LBS also train Antoine’s DSMs and preparers how to use Drake software (the provider of the tax return preparation software that LBS licenses) to prepare tax returns. However, Drake software does not train preparers on tax law, and the training is limited

to data entry and practice tax returns so that preparers know where to enter information in the software. Drake software itself does not provide in-person training.

39. Incredulously, Gachette claims that the IRS, not he and LBS, is responsible for providing tax training to LBS franchisees and tax return preparers, and that it is up to the IRS and Drake software to train LBS employees on how to prepare tax returns. However, the IRS and Drake software do not train LBS employees on tax law or proper tax return preparation, nor is it the IRS's duty to train LBS employees how to prepare honest, accurate tax returns. That is LBS's responsibility, which it is completely and utterly failing to meet.

40. The IRS requires that individuals applying for an Electronic Filer Identification Number ("EFIN"), such as LBS franchisees (including Antoine) and DSMs, complete an application and submit to a background check. The IRS does not provide training on tax law or tax return preparation in connection with its EFIN application. The requirements to obtain an EFIN are available at: <http://www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/e-File-Providers-&-Partners/Become-an-Authorized-e-file-Provider>.

41. An EFIN is a unique number that clearly identifies the authorized provider and the location where the return was prepared. Before a person may prepare and electronically transmit tax returns for customers, he or she must obtain authorization from the IRS to become an authorized provider. Every authorized provider must apply for and receive an EFIN from the IRS. The EFIN requirement is not a means for the IRS to "train" applicants on tax law or how to prepare tax returns.

42. DSMs serve as the Electronic Return Originator ("ERO") for their store. ERO is an Internal Revenue Service designation for the person or entity that electronically submits tax returns on behalf of customers. EROs are identified by their registered EFIN and are responsible

for preparing and filing with each tax return an IRS Form 8879, “IRS e-file Signature Authorization.” Form 8879 is a signature authorization for an e-filed return filed by an ERO on behalf of a customer.

43. IRS Publication 1345 requires that an ERO “be diligent in recognizing fraud and abuse, reporting it to the IRS and preventing it when possible.” Antoine and LBS conduct no meaningful quality control or oversight over their tax return preparers, much less act diligently to prevent the fraud and abuse that is undertaken with respect to the preparation of customers’ tax returns. Indeed, fraudulent return preparation is encouraged and flourishes at many LBS stores.

44. The only supposed quality control that Antoine conducts is purportedly having “Area Managers,” also known as “Area Developers,” conduct occasional reviews of other LBS Tax Services offices. These reviews consist of making sure that employees are dressed properly, that customer files are stored properly, that the “presentation script” and various “cheat sheets” (such as the earned income tax credit “cheat sheet” that lists the answers that must be input into Drake software to complete to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit for a client) are taped to desks, and that the “forms order” cheat sheet (listing the order of forms that must be signed and placed in a customer’s file) is posted on the wall. The reviews also purportedly require the Area Manager to review up to five customer files for quality control; however, the Area Manager does not review whether the customers’ tax returns were properly prepared, but only whether certain forms are maintained in the files.

Defendant’s Fraudulent Activity

45. Antoine and those acting in concert with him and at his direction have created and maintain a business environment and culture of greed at his LBS stores that expressly promotes and encourages the preparation of false and fraudulent federal income tax returns in order to

maximize corporate and individual profits. By doing so, Antoine profits at the expense of his customers and the United States Treasury.

46. Many of LBS's customers have low incomes and are unsophisticated with respect to tax law and tax return preparation. Customers often have no knowledge that LBS prepares and files fraudulent tax returns on their behalf. For others, LBS preparers—with Antoine's consent and urging—mislead customers about the law, particularly with respect to various credits and deductions, and by promising them thousands of dollars of (illegal) refunds to coerce them to pay LBS to prepare their tax returns. Antoine benefits by receiving a significant portion of LBS customers' fraudulently obtained refunds, which he retains through fees.

47. Antoine instructs, directs, assists, advises, encourages, and causes his managers and preparers to engage in illegal practices. These practices include, but are not limited to:

- a. Making fraudulent claims for the Earned Income Tax Credit;
- b. Circumventing due diligence requirements in order to fraudulently maximize the Earned Income Tax Credit;
- c. Improperly claiming false filing status, such as Head of Household when the customer is actually married;
- d. Fabricating Schedule C businesses and related business income and expenses;
- e. Fabricating Schedule A deductions, including but not limited to deductions for unreimbursed employee business expenses and automobile expenses;
- f. Falsely claiming education credits to which their customers are not entitled;
- g. Improperly preparing returns based on paystubs rather than Forms W-2;
- h. Falsely claiming the Fuel Tax Credit;
- i. Failing to provide customers with a copy of the completed tax return;
- j. Guaranteeing refunds; and

- k. Charging deceptive and unconscionable fees.

LBS Tax Services' "Guerilla Marketing"

48. Antoine and LBS solicit customers through what Gachette calls "Guerilla Marketing." "Guerilla Marketing" involves misleading advertising and aggressive in-your-face individual sales pitches, targeted at low income individuals. The purpose is to get as many potential customers in the door, prepare their tax returns, and prepare and attach to their tax returns additional and unnecessary forms containing bogus claims and credits, under the guise that LBS is doing so in order to legally increase the customer's tax refund.

49. Antoine and LBS charge the customer exorbitant fees for preparing the return, for each form prepared and attached to the return, and for filing the return. LBS makes fraudulent claims on these forms, in order to improperly increase customers' refunds. LBS then falsely tells the customers that these forms legally increased the customers' refunds, and charges higher fees due to the additional forms and the higher refund that LBS claimed. These fees are all deducted from the customer's tax refund, often without the customer being told the amount that LBS actually charged for preparing the tax return.

50. "Guerilla Marketing" begins long before the tax filing season begins. LBS advertising focuses on the Earned Income Tax Credit, with street signs, flyers, and business cards that simply state, for example, that a potential customer can receive "\$3169 per child" from the IRS and listing an LBS phone number to call.

51. Antoine and LBS instruct his employees to approach potential customers, ask whether they have children, hand out business cards, put up yard signs, and lure the potential customers to the LBS stores with promises of large refunds. This marketing occurs

predominantly at large-scale retailers and grocery stores (marketers are specifically directed to solicit business at Wal-Mart), dollar stores, apartment complexes, public plazas, and large public events where LBS believes it can find potential customers who fit the low income demographic that it targets. LBS has also used radio ads, automated telephone calls, flyers on parked cars, billboards, and letters or mailers to previous or potential customers.

52. LBS's "Guerilla Marketing" is so aggressive that the LBS franchise agreement anticipates and accounts for the related fines that are inevitably imposed against LBS's stores by cities and municipalities for violations of local ordinances, particularly regulations pertaining to signs and advertising placed alongside streets. The agreement provides that the first \$500 in fines are paid by the franchisee, with any additional amounts paid by DSMs.

53. DSMs are instructed that if the "city comes to your office, you should apologize and beg; say you weren't aware of the rules," and then go put out "200 yard signs 3 miles away from your office in each direction" at midnight. If a DSM receives a "letter before February 14th saying you have to go to court," the DSM is instructed to "call the courthouse, tell them you have an emergency and can come to court any day in March." The purpose of this is to avoid going to court until LBS's tax preparation and filing season is effectively over.

54. Antoine recruits and employs individuals, referred to as marketers, whose sole job is to solicit customers. Marketers are trained to "be discrete (pretend your shopping)" and "be careful for security that will kick you out." The suggested times to market are "Before work, noon, 6-7 PM and midnight." Marketers are advised to avoid security guards and store employees who will make them leave the premises.

55. Antoine and LBS provide scripts to marketers (in addition to managers and tax return preparers) on how to solicit customers. One script contains general introductory language, with three variations (depending on the date) used to schedule an appointment for the customer

to have his or her tax return prepared. In all three variations, the script begins:

“Hi, I’m John a tax preparer. **This year the IRS is giving \$3000 dollars per kid.** What’s your name? How many kids do you have?”

[The script uses the answer of two children as the example.]

“**Perfect, I can get you \$6000 to \$7000 dollars legally.**”

From December 6 to December 26, before the tax year is even over, the script concludes:

“Do you have you last paycheck stub?”

If the customer says no, the script continues: “OK, What’s your name and number; I will have my secretary give you a call after Christmas to give you directions to the office one hour before.”

From December 26 to January 8, the script concludes:

“Do you have you last paycheck stub?”

If the customer says yes, the script continues: “I can do your taxes with that, what time and date can you come to my office?”

From January 8 to March 14, the script concludes:

“Do you have your W2?”

If the customer says yes, the script continues: “What time and date works best for you to come to my office?”

(emphasis added.)

56. Of course, the IRS does not “give” taxpayers \$3,000 per child. Whether a taxpayer is entitled to a credit, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit, and the amount of the credit that the taxpayer can claim, depends on numerous factors, including whether the child lives with the taxpayer, whether the taxpayer financially supports the child, and the age of the child.

57. Antoine and LBS also provide similar scripts to tax return preparers and administrative staff at each store.

58. Instead of focusing on honest, accurate tax return preparation, LBS's business model is result-oriented. LBS instructs preparers to "SELL ON FEAR!" and to "ALWAYS try to get the customer more than they received the last year filed taxes." LBS's power point presentation at its training session reiterates the script that preparers are repeatedly taught: "If you agree I will leave the forms, If you don't I will take them off" – BUILDS TRUST!" If a customer hesitates, preparers are told to keep reiterating the portion of the script about how each form will get the customer more money from the IRS, and if the customer appears ready to walk away, preparers are instructed to get a DSM to help convince the customer to agree to the LBS's return preparation.

59. LBS employees speaking with potential customers over the phone are instructed to entice the customer by deceptively declaring how much money LBS can get refunded to the customer. For example, if a potential customer questions whether an LBS sign, business card, or radio ad was correct in saying the potential customer could get a tax refund of "\$3169 per child," the employee is instructed to respond that the potential customer "can get this much per child," ask how many children the potential customer has, and then tell the customer that "I can get you anywhere from 6-8 thousand" or "I can get you anywhere from 8-9 thousand," depending on whether the customer has 2 or 3 children. If the potential customer responds by questioning whether there is an income limit for the child credit, the employee is instructed to say that LBS "specialize[s] in maximizing your refund so come on in and we will show you exactly what you are entitled to."

60. The LBS scripts setting forth what employees are required to say upon completing customers' tax returns (or, more specifically, the Form 1040) are egregious and show a blatant disregard of the law. Once an LBS employee has completed the Form 1040, he or she is instructed to say to customers:

“At this time I am getting you back \$ [amount]. Ma'am or Sir, I can search for more forms to get you more money legally. Each form I use will cost you more but you get more money. For instance, I see I can get you an extra \$3000 by using 7 more forms and each form cost[s] about \$75.00. At the end I will let you know how much your refund will be, minus our fees. If you agree I will leave the forms on, if you don't agree, I will take them off.”

LBS cannot legally “get” a customer \$3,000 by “using forms” (for example, the 7 forms in the above script). Individuals receive a refund if it is legally owed and based on the honest reporting of facts, not, as is the case with LBS's tax return preparation, by adding forms to tax returns that do not apply and that customers do not understand. LBS entices customers with the possibility of a bigger (albeit fraudulent) refund based on LBS's addition of forms to customers' tax returns but, in reality, a form or schedule applies or does not apply and must be attached to a return only based on customer-specific facts or circumstances.

61. LBS's tax return preparation is result-oriented, rather than being honest and accurate. LBS's tax return preparation is based on maximizing LBS's own profits by drawing customers into a web of deception with promises of money, which comes in the form of bogus refunds issued by the U.S. Treasury as a direct result of the fraudulent claims made on LBS-prepared tax returns.

62. LBS primarily solicits business using deceptive marketing focusing on the Earned Income Tax Credit, particularly as it relates to claiming dependents. During the 2012 filing

season, in addition to the yard signs which read “Tax Refund \$3094.00 per child,” LBS also passed out the following business cards to potential customers:



63. LBS’s advertisements regarding the Earned Income Tax Credit are misleading, at best, because the amount of the credit depends on several factors, such as income, marital status, and whether the child actually qualified as a dependent. LBS’s advertisements simply recite the maximum amount of the credit that a qualifying taxpayer may be eligible to receive per child with no mention, let alone explanation, of the criteria that must be met to qualify for such an amount. Rather the advertisements clearly suggest that if you have children you will receive refunds of \$3,094 for one child and \$5,112 for two children. Moreover, preparing tax returns using a taxpayer’s pay stub, as advertised, rather than a Form W-2, violates IRS regulations. And, of course, the IRS does not issue a “same day tax refund.”

64. LBS effectively offers guarantees to its customers that they will receive refunds. LBS’s advertising clearly suggests that customers with children will receive a refund. Some of

the ads specifically refer to “EIC,” and for those that do not, it is evident, based on the specific amount identified in the ads and the income demographic that LBS targets, that the approximately \$3,000 “per child” is due to the Earned Income Tax Credit. In addition, the “three things that I am going to do for you today” script that LBS requires employees to memorize and recite explicitly states, “I will tell you how much your refund will be.” Guaranteeing the payment of any tax refund or the allowance of any tax credit violates 26 U.S.C. § 7407(b)(1)(C). LBS’s tax return preparation practices ensure that customers do receive a refund, frequently based on bogus claims for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Earned Income Tax Credit Fraud and Failure to Comply with Due Diligence Requirements

65. Antoine and many of his managers and tax return preparers prepare tax returns that include fraudulent claims for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) often based on bogus dependents, fabricated business income and expenses, and/or false filing status.

66. The EITC is a refundable tax credit available to certain low-income working people. The amount of the credit is based on the taxpayer’s income, filing status, and claimed number of dependents. The requirements for claiming the EITC are set forth in I.R.C. § 32 and the accompanying Treasury Regulations.

67. Because the EITC is a refundable credit, claiming an EITC can, in certain circumstances, reduce a taxpayer’s federal tax liability below zero, entitling the taxpayer to a payment from the U.S. Treasury.

68. Due to the method used to calculate the EITC, an individual can claim a larger EITC by claiming multiple dependents and, for certain income ranges, individuals with higher earned income are entitled to a larger credit than those with lower earned income. The amount of the credit increases as income increases between \$1 and \$13,050, and decreases as income

increases beyond \$17,100. Some tax preparers who manipulate reported income to maximize the EITC refer to this range of earned income corresponding to a maximum EITC as the “sweet spot” or “golden range.” For tax year 2012, the maximum EITC was \$5,891 and was available to eligible individuals with three dependent children who earned income between \$13,050 and \$17,100.

69. Because of the way the EITC is calculated, reporting more income, up to a certain point, allows customers to receive a larger refundable credit. Similarly, claiming losses to offset higher income to decrease the total reported income and to fall within the “sweet spot” allows customers to claim a larger refundable credit.

70. To solicit business, LBS uses enticements of higher refunds based on the number of children that a potential customer has.

71. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers acting at his direction and with his knowledge and consent, falsify information to claim the maximum EITC for customers. Unscrupulous tax return preparers at LBS exploit the rules by claiming on their customers’ returns bogus dependents and/or by reporting phony Schedule C businesses and income. Consistent with the “magic numbers” instruction sheet, to bring the customer’s reported earned income within the “sweet spot” for the EITC, and depending on a customer’s actual income, LBS preparers inflate or fabricate Schedule C income to fraudulently increase customers’ reported earned income, or claim bogus Schedule C expenses to fraudulently decrease customers’ reported earned income.

72. Reporting bogus income not only improperly enables LBS to falsely claim the EITC, but to fraudulently claim other credits as well, including the Child Tax Credit and American Opportunity Tax Credit.

73. Schedule C fraud is a means by which unscrupulous tax return preparers, like many of those at LBS, manipulate customers' income in order to obtain bogus refunds based on fictitious claims for the EITC and other credits. Because of the amount of the EITC credit, these preparers frequently charge higher fees in connection with their preparation of bogus Schedules C. Of the fees that LBS charges per IRS form, it charges \$250 or more for a Schedule C, the most for any form.

74. Because of the potential for abuse in claiming the EITC, Congress has authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to impose "due diligence" requirements on federal tax return preparers claiming the EITC for their customers. *See* 26 U.S.C. § 6695(g). These "due diligence" requirements obligate the tax return preparer to make "reasonable inquiries" to ensure the customer is legitimately entitled to the EITC. The tax return preparer may not "ignore the implications of information furnished to, or known by, the tax return preparer, and must make reasonable inquiries if the information furnished to the tax return preparer appears to be incorrect, inconsistent, or incomplete." *See* 26 C.F.R. § 1.6695-2 (2011). Tax return preparers must also document their compliance with these requirements and keep that documentation for three years. *Id.*

75. To document compliance with the due diligence requirements, tax return preparers must complete either the "Paid Preparer's Earned Income Credit Checklist" (Form 8867) and record and maintain other documentation verifying customer eligibility for the EITC.

76. As mentioned above, Antoine and LBS provide his DSMs and preparers with specific instructions or cheat sheets that provide predetermined answers to input into the Drake software to claim the EITC on customers' returns, and dictate what boxes to check on the IRS Form 8867, "Paid Preparer's Earned Income Credit Checklist." These instructions – and the predetermined answers – demonstrate that the actual information (if any) provided by customers is disregarded by preparers, who simply answer the questions in the manner that LBS instructs in order to claim the EITC for customers who are not actually eligible for the credit (or for the inflated amount claimed by LBS):

EIC 2 NOTES:
<p>SITUATION 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -W2 taxpayer: click "yes" for "Does the income appear to be sufficient to support the taxpayer and qualifying children....." - click "not applicable" "taxpayers with self-employment income." <p>SITUATION 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Schedule C taxpayer: click "yes" for "Does the income appear to be sufficient to support the taxpayer and qualifying children....." - Question 2.) Fill out how many years the business has been in existence - Question 3.) Fill in "self" - Question 4.) Click "no" - Question 4b.) Type "by income only" - Question 5.) Click "yes" - Question 5a.) Click "log books" - Question 6.) "No" if there are no 1099-misc forms to support income, "yes" for 1099 taxpayer - Question 6b.) "Yes" - Question 7.) "Yes" - Question 8.) "Yes" - Question 9.) "No"

77. A portion of a similar LBS instruction sheet is below (the Drake software questions are followed by the predetermined answers in bold):

EIC2 INCOME (NOT A SCHC)

DOES THE INCOME APPEAR TO BE SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT THE TAXPAYER AND QUALIFYING CHILDREN? **CHECK YES**
TAXPAYERS WITH SELF-EMPLOYMENT INCOME: **CHECK NOT APPLICABLE**

EIC2 INCOME (W/SCH C)

DOES THE INCOME APPEAR TO BE SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT THE TAXPAYER AND QUALIFYING CHILDREN? **CHECK YES**
HOW LONG HAVE YOU OWNED YOUR BUISNESS? **1 YEAR**
CAN YOU PROVIDE ALL DOCUMENTATION TO SUBSTAIATE YOUR BUISNESS? **CHECK RECEIPTS OR RECEIPT BOOK**
WHO MAINTAINS THE BUISNESS RECORDS? **SELF**
DO YOU MAINTAIN SEPARATE BANKING ACCOUNTS FOR PERSONAL AND BUISNESS TRANSACTIONS? **CHECK NO**
IF "NO" HOW DO YOU DIFFERNTIATE BETWEEN PERSONAL AND BUISNESS TRANSACTIONS AND MONETARY ASSETS? **CASH LOG**
WERE SATISFACTORY RECORDS OF INCOME AND EXPENSE PROVIDED? **CHECK YES**
IF "YES" IN WHAT FORM WERE THESE RECORDS PROVIDED? **CHECK PAID INVOICES**
FORM 1099-MISC NO/YES/YES/NO

78. Because the Forms 8867 EITC Checklists that Antoine's LBS stores generate are based on instruction sheets providing pre-determined answers showing that customers are eligible for the EITC, these forms, maintained in customers' files, appear to be complete, accurate, and based on statements and documentation provided by customers. In reality, because the answers are pre-determined, the only function of the LBS-completed Form 8867 EITC Checklist is to give the illusion that LBS complies with the due diligence requirements.

79. A closer review of LBS customer files reveals that Antoine and many of his managers and preparers utterly fail to comply with the due diligence requirements. Customers are given an intake form to complete, which is comprised of several sections. The first few sections request basic information such as name, address, social security number, filing status, and dependents. The final section pertains to any business that the customer operated. Often these intake forms are not fully completed by the customer, if they are marked at all. In many instances the LBS preparer entirely disregards the customer's responses on the intake form.

80. The LBS intake form apparently serves no other purpose than to give the illusion that LBS is questioning its customers and complying with the due diligence requirements. Frequently LBS preparers, rather than the customers, complete the form to support the claims that the preparer is fabricating on customers' tax returns.

81. The conduct of Antoine and many of his managers and preparers shows an intentional disregard for the tax laws and in particular for the due diligence requirements, and demonstrates their unwillingness to comply with the requirements. Not only do Antoine and many of his managers and preparers fail to adhere to the due diligence requirements, but they are falsifying information in order to maximize the EITC for their customers.

Intentionally Claiming an Improper Filing Status and Bogus Dependents

82. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers also routinely prepare tax returns reporting false filing status. Specifically, head-of-household filing status is claimed on customers' tax returns to increase the amount of the customers' standard deduction, even though LBS is aware that the customer does not qualify for head-of-household status.

83. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers frequently file separate returns for married couples who are not living apart, improperly using the "head-of-household" or "single" filing status, both of which are unavailable to married couples living together. Often, this is an attempt to increase the claimed EITC; a couple with at least two children who, together, would otherwise receive a single EITC refund of \$5,000 by properly claiming "married, filing jointly," may instead each receive a refund of \$3,000 or more, by both falsely claiming head-of-household or single status and each claiming at least one dependent.

84. Additionally, Antoine and many of his managers and preparers claim dependents who do not actually qualify as dependents on customers' tax returns, and then claim head-of-

household filing status to increase the customers' refunds through both the false filing status and fraudulent EITC claim based on the bogus dependents.

85. For example, customer M.P. had his 2011 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 1427 10th St., West Palm Beach, Florida. M.P. told the preparer that he lived with his girlfriend and his son in 2011. However, LBS falsely reported M.P.'s girlfriend (a non-qualifying dependent) as a dependent on M.P.'s tax return, and described her as M.P.'s "stepchild." As a result of the bogus dependent (and other fraudulent credits), LBS falsely claimed an EITC in the amount of \$4,662, and a bogus refund of \$8,786 on M.P. tax return.

Fabricated Schedule C Business Income and Expenses

86. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers also prepare tax returns reporting non-existent businesses on bogus Forms Schedule C. On some of these returns, LBS reports substantial income, but little or no expenses. On other returns, LBS reports substantial expenses, but little or no income. The determining factor is whether LBS needs to inflate a customer's income (or create income when the customer has none) to bring the income within the EITC range or "sweet spot," or to lower the taxable income of a customer who has actual income (such as wages reported on a W-2) in order to either bring the income within the EITC "sweet spot" or simply to create a phony business loss to offset the customer's wages and fraudulently reduce the customer's income tax liability.

87. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers also coerce customers to provide information that LBS can then use to fabricate claims on the customers' tax return. One LBS script, captioned "Schedule C," instructs preparers as follows: "if the person has a W-2 and made 5,000 or less ask if they have their own business give them examples of their own business (ex. hairstyling, nails, cutting grass)." Thus, based on LBS's suggestions, if a customer responds that

they cut a friend's hair, or cut a family member's lawn, or cooked for a church event, LBS then falsely reports that as a business on a Schedule C with bogus income and/or expenses in order to bring the income within the EITC "sweet spot" or to simply reduce the taxable income.

88. Customer D.H. had her 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 1508 South Babcock Rd., Melbourne, Florida. D.H. received wages of \$27,714 and a pension in the amount of \$2,575 in 2012. D.H. did not have any business, and did not tell LBS that she had any business. LBS falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to the tax return that D.H. had a business called "D_____ Day," that had no sales but incurred a loss in the amount of \$13,400. The phony business expenses included \$2,200 for advertising, \$5,200 for leasing business property, \$1,800 for supplies, \$2,400 for utilities, and \$1,800 for a cell phone. The phony Schedule C loss falsely reduced D.H.'s taxable income to \$16,889. As a result, LBS fraudulently claimed a maximum EITC in the amount of \$5,891, and a bogus refund in the amount of \$11,354.

89. Customer R.G. had his 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 2215 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida. R.G. went to LBS after his brother told him that LBS could get him a bigger refund; the LBS preparer told R.G. that he would have to pay LBS more to get a larger tax refund. R.G. worked repairing wrecked cars and trucks in 2012, and received a Form W-2 from his employer showing that he received \$47,666 in wages. R.G. provided the LBS preparer with a copy of his Form W-2 and Form 1098 showing his mortgage interest. LBS falsely reported on the Schedule C attached to R.G.'s return that he had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that had no sales but expenses totaling \$32,372 (including insurance expenses of \$3,241, rent for vehicles or machinery of \$9,860, rent of business property of \$4,460, repairs and maintenance of \$1,873, supplies of \$3,640, utilities of

\$2,824, gas of \$2,688, food of \$2,246, cell phone of \$660, and uniforms of \$880). R.G. was not aware that LBS claimed this phony business on his tax return. By falsely claiming the Schedule C business reporting a loss of \$32,372, LBS fraudulently claimed a bogus refund in the amount of \$4,837 on R.G.'s tax return.

Bogus Schedule A Deductions

90. Reporting bogus Form Schedule A deductions is another tactic commonly used by Antoine and many of his managers and preparers to fraudulently reduce customers' taxable income. As with bogus Schedule C business losses, the bogus Schedule A deductions are typically reported on the tax returns of customers who have over \$24,000 in wage income reported on Forms W-2.

91. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers often prepare tax returns for customers which include false claims for purported unreimbursed employee business expenses. Section 162 of the Internal Revenue Code governs trade or business expenses. These returns often claim deductions for fabricated, fraudulently inflated, and/or non-qualifying business expenses. IRS Publication 529 (which is readily available and easy to understand) provides examples of qualifying business expenses, including "Union dues and expenses" and "Work clothes and uniforms if required and not suitable for everyday use." *See* IRS Publication 529 (2013) (available online at: <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p529/ar02.html>). Publication 529 also provides examples of expenses that do not qualify as business expenses, including "Commuting expenses," "Lunches with co-workers," "Meals while working late," and "Personal, living, or family expenses."

92. One LBS script instructs the preparer to ask specific questions to customers:

(SCHEDULE A QUESTIONS)

- HOW MUCH DID YOU SPEND ON GAS?
- DID YOU ATTEND CHURCH? (10% TITHES) OR -DID YOU GIVE TO ANY CHARITIES?
- DID YOU PURCHASE ANY WORK UNIFORM(S)?
- DID YOU PURCHASE ANY WORK SHOES?
- DID YOU PURCHASE ANY TOOLS?
- ANY MEDICAL OR DENTAL EXPENSES?
- WHAT WAS YOUR CELL PHONE BILL?

If customers respond, for example, that they drove to and from work, Antoine and many of his managers and preparers then claim a non-qualifying expense for commuting on the customers' returns. If customers respond that they attend church, Antoine and many of his managers and preparers claim that the customers made charitable contributions, even if they did not. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers thus push customers to provide information that Antoine and many of his managers and preparers can manipulate to make bogus claims on customers' tax returns.

93. The LBS training "test" specifically instructs preparers that "Schedule A should only be used when the taxpayer has an outstanding income of 24,000 [dollars] or higher." Antoine and many of his managers and preparers frequently report on Forms Schedule A that customers had qualifying expenses such as medical expenses, state and personal property taxes, charitable contributions, and uniforms, when the customer had no such expenses.

94. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers commonly improperly deduct vehicle expenses on the Forms Schedule A attached to customers' returns. In fact, LBS's training "test" lists "Auto Expense" as one of the "4 forms that can get the client the maximum refund." Forms Schedule A and C are also on among those listed forms.

95. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers frequently report that a customer used a personal vehicle for a business purpose and that the customer drove tens of thousands of miles for work. In reality, the majority of this purported mileage is for commuting from home to work, which is not a qualifying vehicle expense. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers also inflate the actual mileage that the customer drives each day to and from work. Therefore, not only are Antoine and many of his managers and preparers claiming an improper, non-qualifying expense, but they are falsely inflating the mileage number in order to further increase the bogus deduction on customers' tax returns.

96. For example, customers S.A. and T.A. had their 2011 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 400 S. Federal Hwy., Boynton Beach, Florida. The As. received wages totaling \$58,037 in 2011. LBS falsely claimed on the Schedule A attached to the tax return that the As. had \$17,278 in unreimbursed employee business expenses, including \$11,238 in vehicle expenses and \$6,040 for "church." The As. had no such unreimbursed employee business expenses. The LBS preparer also falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to the 2011 tax return that S.A. had a business, purportedly called the "adult geriatric inst of fl," through which he had no gross receipts but incurred a loss in the amount of \$29,268. S.A. had no such business and his only income came from his employer, the Adult & Geriatric Institute of Florida, which issued S.A. a Form W-2. S.A. gave this Form W-2 to the LBS preparer, and the LBS preparer then reported his employer's business name on the Schedule C. The phony business expenses included \$13,565 for car and truck expenses, \$5,621 for repairs and maintenance, \$5,321 for supplies, \$1,551 for meals and entertainment, and \$3,210 for utilities. By claiming this fabricated Schedule A deductions and phony business loss on the As.' tax return, LBS fraudulently reduced the As.' taxable income to zero, claimed an EITC in the

amount of \$4,276, and claimed a bogus refund in the amount of \$9,635 on the As.' 2011 tax return.

Bogus Education Credits

97. Another practice at Antoine's LBS stores is fabricating education expenses and falsely claiming refundable education credits, including the American Opportunity Education Credit, on customers' federal income tax returns. Unlike many tax credits, a refundable tax credit entitles qualifying taxpayers to receive refunds even if they have no tax liability. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers routinely and repeatedly claim false education credits on the tax returns of customers who did not attend college and had no qualifying education expenses, in order to fraudulently reduce their customers' taxable income and generate a larger bogus refund (and increasing the fees that they charge to customers).

98. For example, on the 2011 federal income tax return of M.P. (described in paragraph 85), LBS falsely claimed an American Opportunity education credit in the amount of \$1,839. LBS falsely claimed that M.P., his girlfriend, and his son (who was only 3 years old, which the LBS preparer was aware of because the preparer reported the son's year of birth on the EITC form also attached to M.P.'s tax return) all had college education expenses in 2011. This credit, along with other fraudulent claims (described in paragraphs 85 and 117), resulted in LBS claiming a bogus refund in the amount of \$8,786 on M.P.'s tax return.

Improperly Preparing and Filing Returns based on Pay Stubs

99. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers also prepare and file federal income tax returns using customers' end-of-year pay stubs and then file their customers' tax returns without valid Forms W-2. In other instances, an IRS Form 4852, "Substitute for Form W-2," is attached to customers' returns, which falsely claims that the employer did not timely

issue a Form W-2. In reality, the returns are prepared before the end of the tax year and/or before an employer even has the ability to issue a Form W-2 for that year.

100. Federal tax returns for wage earners must be prepared using Forms W-2. Using pay stubs to prepare and file tax returns is improper and violates IRS rules. Moreover, end-of-year pay stubs frequently omit income and distributions that are shown on employer-issued Forms W-2. Thus, preparing and filing federal income tax returns based on information from end-of-year pay stubs inevitably results in errors and omissions on federal tax returns, which necessarily interferes with the administration and enforcement of the internal revenue laws. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers know that using paystubs to prepare and file returns violates IRS rules and regulations because in order to participate in the IRS's electronic filing program, all electronic filers, including those at Antoine's LBS stores, must acknowledge that they will comply with the IRS's requirements, which expressly prohibit filing returns prepared with pay stubs and without genuine Forms W-2. IRS Publication 1345 also mandates that electronic filers "must not electronically file individual income tax returns prior to receiving Forms W-2, W-2G or 1099-R."

101. LBS begins soliciting customers in December of each year by falsely telling customers that their returns can be prepared using their most recent paystub. LBS's stores open on December 26, before the end of the tax year, before customers know how much income they earned and taxes they owe for the year, and before employers are able to issue Forms W-2 to their employees. Forms W-2 are not available to employees before the end of the calendar tax year, and tax returns cannot be filed before January of the processing year.

102. The “presentation script” that employees are trained to recite to prospective customers specifically instructs the employee to tell the potential customer to bring in their paystub to have their tax return prepared.

103. LBS customers fill out a taxpayer personal information sheet, which identifies the customer’s name, address, social security number, and dependent information. The customers often complete these forms in December or early January, and because their employers have not yet issued Forms W-2, LBS uses the customers’ most recent pay stub to prepare tax returns and create fake Forms W-2. LBS instructs its employees to retain the original pay stub in the customer files and to not file the pay stub with the IRS. LBS stores even maintain a separate storage bin for files of customers whose returns were prepared using a pay stub rather than a Form W-2.

104. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers know that preparing tax returns based on paystubs violates IRS rules and regulations. As previously mentioned, DSMs serve as EROs for the store they manage and have EFINs to electronically file returns. IRS Publication 1345 also mandates that “EROs must not electronically file individual income tax returns prior to receiving Forms W-2, W-2G or 1099-R.”

105. The power point presentation that LBS shows at its training sessions instructs employees to tell potential customers: “Yes, we do last paycheck stubs. Come to our office and we will take care of you!” The presentation also warns employees not to file the actual paystub with the IRS because “your EFIN will be SUSPENDED and you will be DROPPED!!” Thus, LBS encourages the pay stub filing practice, but simply instructs its employees not to get caught.

106. Instead of filing the pay stub, the LBS training “test” specifically instructs preparers that a “Form 4852 is used for all last pay stub clients.” Form 4852 is a Substitute for

Form W-2 that is properly used when an employer does not issue a Form W-2 to the employee. It is not permissible to use a Form 4852 if a Form W-2 is or will be issued; the Form 4852 itself lists the possible penalties for improper use.

107. By preparing tax returns before the end of the tax year, Antoine and LBS unfairly solicit business before competitors.

108. For example, customer L.W. had her 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 1508 South Babcock Rd., Melbourne, Florida. L.W gave the LBS preparer a copy of her last paystub from her employer (her return is dated January 1, 2013). Because the return was prepared using W.L.'s last paystub, the taxes withheld by her employer in 2012 were underreported by \$154 on her tax return. LBS also falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to the tax return that W.L. had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that had no sales but incurred a loss in the amount of \$20,589. The phony business expenses included \$4,420 for advertising, \$9,890 for leasing business property, \$3,353 for supplies, \$1,901 for utilities, and \$1,025 for a cell phone. W.L. had no such business and did not discuss these phony expenses with the LBS preparer. By claiming the phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$3,946 and a bogus refund in the amount of \$10,240 on W.L.'s tax return.

Fraudulent Fuel Tax Credit Deductions

109. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers prepare and file federal income tax returns for customers on which they improperly claim false or fraudulent fuel tax credits using IRS Form 4136, "Credit for Federal Tax Paid on Fuels." The fuel tax credit is available only to taxpayers who operate farm equipment or other off-highway business vehicles. Moreover, the equipment or vehicles using the fuel must not be registered for highway uses.

Antoine and many of his managers and preparers improperly claim the fuel tax credit for customers' purported business motor fuel purchases, or report a fraudulently inflated amount of fuel that the customer used in his or her off-highway business equipment.

110. Internal Revenue Code section 6421(a) provides a tax credit for fuel used in an off-highway business use. Off-highway business use is any off-highway use of fuel in a trade or business or in an income-producing activity where the equipment or vehicle is not registered and not required to be registered for use on public highways. IRS Publication 225 provides the following examples of off-highway business fuel use: (1) in stationary machines such as generators, compressors, power saws, and similar equipment; (2) for cleaning purposes; and (3) in forklift trucks, bulldozers, and earthmovers. See IRS Publication 225 (2013), Farmer's Tax Guide, Chapter 14 (2013) (available online at: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p225.pdf)

111. IRS Publication 510 defines a highway vehicle as any "self-propelled vehicle designed to carry a load over public highways, whether or not it is also designed to perform other functions." A public highway includes any road in the United States that is not a private roadway. This includes federal, state, county, and city roads and streets. These highway vehicles are not eligible for the fuel tax credit. IRS Publication 510 provides the following as examples of highway vehicles which are not eligible for the fuel tax credit: passenger automobiles, motorcycles, buses, and highway-type trucks and truck tractors. See IRS Publication 510 (2013), Excise Taxes, Chapter 2 (available online at: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p510.pdf).

112. IRS Publication 510 provides the following example of an appropriate application of the fuel tax credit:

Caroline owns a landscaping business. She uses power lawn mowers and chain saws in her business. The gasoline used in the power lawn mowers and chain saws qualifies as fuel used in an off-highway business use. The gasoline used in her personal lawn mower at home does not qualify.

113. In short, the fuel tax credit does not apply to passenger cars or other vehicles that are registered or required to be registered to drive on public highways.

114. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers prepare federal income tax returns for customers and improperly reduce customers' reported tax liabilities by claiming bogus fuel tax credits under I.R.C. § 6421, falsely claiming that those customers used gasoline for qualified off-highway business purposes.

115. For example, on the tax return of customer R.L. (described in paragraph 138), LBS falsely claimed a fuel tax credit in the amount of \$626, based on R.L.'s purported purchase of 3,420 gallons of fuel for use in "certain intercity and local buses." R.L., of course, did not purchase 3,420 gallons of fuel for buses, and did not tell the LBS preparer that she had any such expense.

116. Similarly, on the 2011 federal income tax return of G.A. and N.O. (described in paragraph 146), LBS falsely claimed a federal fuel tax credit in the amount of \$542, when G.A. and N.O. did not purchase any fuel in 2011 that would entitle them to the credit.

117. On the 2011 federal income tax return of M.P. (described in paragraph 85), LBS falsely claimed a fuel tax credit in the amount of \$726, purportedly for the purchase of \$2,986 gallons of undyed kerosene for use in an off-highway vehicle. M.P. did not purchase any such fuel and was unaware that LBS claimed this fraudulent credit on his tax return.

Deceptive, Unconscionable, and Undisclosed Fees

118. Antoine's LBS stores charge unconscionably high fees to prepare tax returns, mostly through added, deceptive fees. These fees are typically charged without customers' knowledge.

119. LBS intentionally deceives its customers regarding the fees charged for the preparation of tax returns.

120. The LBS training "test" specifically instructs employees to tell potential customers who call LBS asking what the charge is for preparing a tax return to respond with: "\$75. Would you like to set an appointment?" The "Telephone Script" instructing employees how to speak to a potential customer on the phone directs employees to respond to the question "How much do you charge?" with: "We charge \$75. You do not have to pay us up front; it will be deducted automatically from your refund."

121. However, the actual cost may be several hundred dollars or more depending on the forms and schedules attached to the tax return. LBS charges additional fees for each form and schedule (such as a Schedule C or a Form 8863 for an education credit) attached to the Form 1040 tax return. LBS charges separate fees for forms and schedules such as the electronic filing authorization (Form 8879) which is required for e-filing, the EITC qualifying child form (Schedule EIC), and the related EITC due diligence checklist (Form 8867), which must be completed in connection with a claim for the EITC. These fees result in a total tax return preparation fee much higher than the \$75 advertised.

122. LBS also has so-called "999 charge weeks." During these periods, Gachette and LBS franchisees (including Antoine) encourage LBS stores to charge \$999 – or "as much as possible," according to franchisee Douglas Mesadieu – for the preparation of tax returns that, at

other times, would not result in such high fees. The sole purpose of “999 charge weeks” is to maximize the amount of revenue generated by LBS stores, and the high fees charged during these periods are not based on the difficulty or amount of time in preparing customers’ tax returns.

123. Customers must also pay the “service bureau” and “LBS transmittal” fees, totaling \$74, and fees to Drake software and EPS Financial (the refund processor) of \$7 and \$15 to \$20, respectively, in 2013. Thus, for a customer to have LBS prepare and e-file a basic federal income tax return (which is the appropriate return for the majority of customers), the actual bare minimum is far more than the \$75 advertised amount.

124. The high fees (and fee structure, which encourages the addition of unnecessary and often improper forms and schedules to the Form 1040) are a strong incentive for LBS to prepare and file fraudulent returns claiming excessive refunds based on bogus claims and associated forms and schedules.

125. Because LBS targets low-income individuals, the high fees frequently pose a significant financial hardship for its customers. Additionally, fees are unconscionable for the basic tax returns being prepared for these customers, who are often eligible for free tax return preparation and electronic filing elsewhere.

126. Antoine and his LBS stores also routinely and intentionally fail to disclose to customers all fees charged. LBS trains its employees how to present forms to customers to sign, including a form acknowledging the fees charged, without allowing the customer to closely review or understand the forms they are signing. Alternatively, LBS tells customers one amount for fees and then later increases the fees without the customers’ knowledge or consent.

Customers are often surprised to learn that the refund requested on their return is hundreds if not thousands of dollars more than the refund amount that they received after the fees were deducted.

127. Customers often complain that they did not know in advance that they would be charged exorbitant fees. LBS provides its customers with the amount of the refund that they will be receiving, which is much less than the refund amount that was actually claimed on their tax return (which is not disclosed to customers at the time their tax returns are prepared). This is a recurring theme of complaints filed with the IRS and the Better Business Bureau, as well as local news reports regarding LBS locations across the country.

128. To the extent that customers are advised that additional fees may be charged per each additional form, they are not advised upon completion of the preparation of the tax return the total amount of those fees. If customers question the fee, LBS employees are instructed to tell the customer how much more money the preparer got the customer by adding additional forms to the tax return to increase the refund, and that, as the preparer stated in the initial “presentation script” each of those forms to get the customer more money back costs an additional fee.

129. LBS’s fees are not paid by customers at the time of the preparation of their tax returns, but instead are subtracted from the customers’ tax refund. By doing so, LBS is able to conceal from unsuspecting customers the actual amount that the customers pay to have their tax return prepared. Customers typically do not discover that LBS charged much more than the customers anticipated for the preparation of their tax return until the customers receive a refund that is much less than quoted by the tax return preparer because LBS had subtracted its high fees.

130. Tax refunds issued to customers are directed from the IRS to a third-party processor’s bank account. The processor then deducts and transmits the fees owed to Gachette

and Antoine for preparing the tax returns. The remaining refund amount is then directed to the customer, through direct deposit or check. The check issued to the customer makes no reference to the amount of fees deducted, which makes it easy for LBS to conceal, inflate and/or lie about its fees.

131. LBS's practice of charging unconscionable and undisclosed fees violates consumer protection laws. The undisclosed and unconscionable fees also interfere with the administration and enforcement of the internal revenue laws. Potential customers go to LBS believing that they will be charged a reasonable fee for the honest and accurate preparation of their tax return. Instead, LBS charges unconscionable fees (based on the inclusion of additional forms and schedules that frequently make fabricated claims designed to fraudulently increase the customers' refund), that are subtracted from customers' falsely inflated refunds, without full disclosure to the customer. Such predatory behavior erodes consumer confidence in tax return preparers and dissuades taxpayers from seeking professional assistance with the preparation of their federal tax returns.

**Failure to Provide Customers with Copies of their Completed Tax Returns
in Violation of 26 U.S.C. § 6701(a)**

132. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers commonly fail to provide customers with copies of their completed tax returns. The completed tax return, filed with the IRS, shows the refund that LBS is claiming for the customer. By giving a copy of the tax return to the customer, the customer is able to determine the amount of fees charged by LBS by subtracting the amount of the refund that the customer actually receives from the amount of the refund claimed on the tax return. LBS's failure to provide a copy of a customer's completed tax return is part of LBS's strategy to conceal its actual fees from its customers.

133. Failing to provide a customer with a copy of the completed tax return also violates 26 U.S.C. § 6107(a), which requires that a tax return preparer “shall furnish a completed copy of [a tax return or claim for refund] to the taxpayer not later than the time such return or claim is presented for such taxpayer’s signature.”

134. LBS’s training “test” states that employees should provide a customer with a copy of the customer’s tax return, but “Only if we will be E-filing the same day or if we have already E-filed.” In reality, LBS customers do not receive copies of their tax returns, particularly those whose returns are prepared based on a pay stub days or weeks before the IRS even begins to accept filed tax returns. The answer to the LBS “test” question about whether to “give customers their copies of their 1040 tax papers” on January 5, 2013 is simply “NO.”

135. Not only does LBS not provide a copy of the completed tax return to customers at the time it is prepared, but it fails to provide a copy after electronically filing the return, and also refuses to provide a copy later on the customer’s demand.

**Examples of the Widespread and Common Fraud at
Antoine’s LBS Tax Services Locations**

136. The IRS has examined tax returns of many customers of Antoine’s LBS stores. In addition to the customers described above, the following examples show the rampant fraud.

137. Married customers C.Z. and A.Z. had their 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 1508 South Babcock Rd., Melbourne, Florida. The Zs. provided the LBS preparer with a copy of C.Z.’s last paystub for 2012. The LBS preparer asked the Zs. if they had any business receipts, but C.Z. replied that he did not have a business. The LBS preparer then falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to the tax return that C.Z. had a business, through which he had no gross receipts but incurred a loss in the amount of \$14,500.

The phony business expenses included \$2,000 for advertising, \$5,800 for supplies, \$5,500 for utilities, and \$1,200 for a cell phone. By claiming this phony business loss on the Zs.' tax return, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$1,884 and a bogus refund in the amount of \$13,205.

138. Customer R.L. had her 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 1508 South Babcock Rd., Melbourne, Florida. R.L. gave the LBS preparer a copy of the Form W-2 from her employer and Form 1099 from the federal government Thrift Savings Plan. In addition to falsely claiming a federal fuel tax credit (described in paragraph 115), LBS falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to the tax return that R.L. had a business (not identified by name or type of business, and purportedly operated out of her apartment), through which she had no gross receipts but incurred a loss in the amount of \$24,402. The phony business expenses included \$3,400 for advertising, \$2,800 for an office, \$5,451 for supplies, \$5,451 for utilities, and \$4,800 for other expenses (\$1,500 for a cell phone, \$800 for internet, and \$2,500 for "cablet"). By claiming the false fuel tax credit and the phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed a bogus refund in the amount of \$3,756 on R.L.'s tax return.

139. Customer T.M. had his 2011 and 2012 federal income tax returns prepared at the LBS store located at 400 S. Federal Hwy., Boynton Beach, Florida. In 2011 and 2012, T.M. was employed as a plumber and did not operate his own business or work as an independent contractor; all of his income came from his employer and was reported on a Form W-2. T.M. received wages of \$37,216 and \$41,715 in 2011 and 2012, respectively. On the Schedule C attached to T.M.'s 2011 tax return, LBS falsely claimed that T.M. had a business that had no sales but incurred a loss in the amount of \$15,693. The phony business expenses included \$10,554 for car and truck expenses, \$812 for repairs and maintenance, \$31,021 for travel, \$2,103

for utilities, and \$1,203 for gas. By claiming the phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$2,305 and a bogus refund in the amount of \$8,021 on T.M.'s 2011 tax return. On the Schedule C attached to T.M.'s 2012 tax return, LBS falsely claimed that T.M. had a business that had sales of \$2,432, but spent that precise amount – \$2,432 – on cost of goods sold. The phony business also purportedly incurred a loss in the amount of \$23,563, based on phony business expenses including \$10,352 for car and truck expenses, \$2,912 for repairs and maintenance, \$31,021 for travel, \$2,631 for supplies, and \$5,236 for other expense (\$4,215 for gas and \$1,021 for clothes and boots). By claiming the phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$2,995 and a bogus refund in the amount of \$8,264 on T.M.'s 2012 tax return.

140. Customer J.M., who resides in Virginia, had her 2011, 2012, and 2013 federal income tax returns prepared at the LBS store located at 400 S. Federal Hwy., Boynton Beach, Florida. J.M. had her tax return prepared at this LBS store, because a friend of a friend works there. J.M. has never received a copy of her completed tax returns for these years; J.M. has only received a copy of the Form 8879 "IRS e-file Signature Authorization" for these returns. In 2012, J.M. received wages in the amount of \$38,390 from her employer. J.M. did not operate a business in 2012 (or in 2011 or 2013), and did not tell the LBS preparer that she had a business. LBS falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to J.M.'s 2012 tax return that J.M. had a business (not identified by name or type of business), through which she had no gross receipts but incurred a loss in the amount of \$19,178. The phony business expenses included \$2,103 for insurance, \$1,943 for repairs and maintenance, \$2,840 for supplies, \$3,330 for utilities, and \$8,962 for other expenses (\$3,848 for gas, \$4,220 for uniforms, and \$894 for "community learning center"). These false Schedule C expenses fraudulently reduced J.M.'s total income to

\$19,212 and her taxable income to zero. By claiming the phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$4,786 and a bogus refund in the amount of \$8,805 on J.M.'s 2012 tax return.

141. Customers S.A. and T.A. (described in paragraph 96) also had their 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 400 S. Federal Hwy., Boynton Beach, Florida. In 2012, the As. received wages totaling \$58,276. To again fraudulently reduce the As.' taxable income to zero, LBS falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to the 2012 tax return that T.A. (not S.A.) had a business (not identified by name or type of business) through which she had no gross receipts but incurred a loss in the amount of \$30,318. The phony business expenses included \$11,025 for car and truck expenses, \$2,035 for insurance, \$1,523 for renting or leasing business property, \$1,523 for repairs and maintenance, \$2,656 for supplies, \$3,562 for utilities, and \$7,994 for other expenses (\$2,362 for gas and \$5,632 for "church donation"). By fraudulently claiming this phony business loss, LBS claimed an EITC in the amount of \$4,695 and a bogus refund in the amount of \$9,612 on the As.' 2012 tax return.

142. Customer W.R. had his 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 1508 South Babcock Rd., Melbourne, Florida. W.R. received wages of \$14,987 in 2012. On the Schedule C attached to W.R.'s tax return, LBS falsely claimed that W.R. had a business (purportedly operated out of W.R.'s apartment) that had \$1,750 in sales but expenses totaling \$18,700, for a loss in the amount of \$16,950. The phony business expenses included \$14,050 for advertising, \$1,000 for renting or leasing business property, \$800 for supplies, \$1,750 for utilities, and \$1,100 for cell phones. W.R. did not have any such business in 2012. LBS thus reported that W.R.'s total income in 2012 was actually a loss of \$1,963. By claiming

the phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed a bogus refund in the amount of \$1,493 on W.R.'s 2012 tax return.

143. Customer M.B. had her 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 2215 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida. M.B. received wages of \$36,618 and a pension in the amount of \$1,045 in 2012. On the Schedule C attached to M.B.'s tax return, LBS falsely claimed that M.B. had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that had no sales, but expenses totaling \$20,066. The phony business expenses included \$283 for advertising, \$3,306 for insurance, \$7,980 for renting or leasing vehicles or machinery, \$2,589 for renting or leasing business property, \$788 for repairs and maintenance, \$2,256 for supplies, and \$2,864 for utilities. M.B. did not have any such business in 2012. As a result of the phony business loss, LBS falsely reduced M.B.'s total income to \$17,597, fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$5,134, and claimed a bogus refund in the amount of \$11,088 on M.B.'s 2012 tax return.

144. Customer I.C. had her 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 2215 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida. I.C. received wages totaling \$50,220 from four employers in 2012, and gave the LBS preparer all four Forms W-2. However, LBS falsely reported that I.C. only received \$46,206 in wages in 2012. On the Schedule C attached to I.C.'s tax return, LBS falsely claimed that I.C. had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that had no sales, but expenses totaling \$20,780. The phony business expenses included \$284 for advertising, \$3,126 for insurance, \$9,875 for renting or leasing business property, \$1,545 for repairs and maintenance, \$2,687 for supplies, and \$3,263 for utilities. I.C. did not have any such business in 2012 and did not tell the LBS preparer that she had such a business. As a result of the phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC

in the amount of \$3,481, and claimed a bogus refund in the amount of \$11,220 on I.C.'s 2012 tax return. The numbers reported on I.C.'s tax return (including the refund) are very similar to those reported on M.B.'s tax return (described in paragraph 143).

145. Customers L.G. and M.G. had their 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 2215 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida. The Gs. received wages totaling \$64,244 and a pension in the amount of \$3,888 in 2012. On the Schedule C attached to the Gs.' tax return, LBS falsely claimed that M.G. had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that had no sales, but expenses totaling \$44,362. The phony business expenses included \$1,234 for advertising, \$2,621 for insurance, \$12,954 for renting or leasing vehicles or machinery, \$894 for renting or leasing business property, \$3,622 for repairs and maintenance, \$8,621 for supplies, \$1,684 for taxes and licenses, \$3,847 for utilities, and \$7,918 for tools. M.G. did not have any such business in 2012. As a result of the phony business loss, LBS, fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$2,933, and a bogus refund in the amount of \$13,958 on the Gs.' 2012 tax return.

146. Customers G.A. and N.O. had their 2011 and 2012 federal income tax returns prepared at the LBS store located at 1508 South Babcock Rd., Melbourne, Florida. G.A. received wages totaling \$45,499 and \$50,441 in 2011 and 2012, respectively, which LBS reported on their tax returns. N.O. earned approximately \$9,500 in both 2011 and 2012 as an independent contractor providing cleaning services. However, rather than report N.O.'s income on the Schedule C, on G.A.'s and N.O.'s 2011 return, LBS falsely claimed that G.A. (not N.O.) had a business, but no income, and that the business incurred a loss in the amount of \$16,151. The phony business expenses included \$485 for mortgage interest, \$2,451 for utilities, and \$13,215 for other expenses. By claiming the false fuel tax credit (described in paragraph 116)

and reporting a phony business loss rather than the income that N.O. received as an independent contractor, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$3,521 and a bogus refund in the amount of \$3,315 on G.A.'s and N.O.'s 2011 tax return. Similarly, on the Schedule C attached to the 2012 tax return, LBS falsely claimed that G.A. (not N.O.) had a business through which he had no gross receipts but incurred a loss in the amount of \$16,178. The phony business expenses included \$3,548 for advertising, \$3,541 for mortgage interest, \$4,578 for supplies, \$2,451 for utilities, and \$2,600 for other expenses (\$1,800 for cell phone and \$800 for "cab"). By fraudulently claiming this phony business loss and not reporting N.O.'s income, LBS claimed an EITC in the amount of \$2,830 and a bogus refund in the amount of \$3,511 on G.A.'s and N.O.'s 2012 tax return.

147. Customer M.J.B. had her 2012 and 2013 federal income tax returns prepared at the LBS stores located at 400 S. Federal Hwy., Boynton Beach, Florida and 1508 South Babcock St., Melbourne, Florida, respectively. M.J.B. did not have a business in either 2012 or 2013. In 2012, M.J.B. received wages totaling \$20,048. LBS falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to her return that M.J.B. had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that had no sales but had expenses totaling \$10,422, including for insurance (\$5,013), repairs and maintenance (\$1,540), supplies (\$1,512), deductible meals and entertainment (\$756), and utilities (\$1,601). By falsely claiming this phony business loss, LBS fraudulently reduced M.J.B.'s taxable income to zero and claimed a bogus refund of \$1,798 on M.J.B.'s 2012 tax return. Similarly, on M.J.B.'s 2013 tax return prepared at a different Antoine-owned LBS store (identified as AWA Tax Inc. on the return), LBS falsely claimed a phony business on the Schedule C attached to M.J.B.'s tax return. In 2013, M.J.B. received wages totaling \$26,664. In order to fraudulently reduce her taxable income, LBS falsely claimed that M.J.B. had a business

(not identified by name or type of business) that again had no sales, but had expenses totaling \$11,488, including for insurance (\$987) and renting or leasing business property (\$10,501). By claiming this phony business loss, LBS claimed a bogus refund of \$3,144 on M.J.B.'s 2013 tax return.

148. Customer D.G. had his 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 2215 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida. D.G. received wages totaling \$109,668 in 2012. LBS falsely claimed that D.G. had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that had no sales in 2012, but incurred expenses totaling \$44,382. These bogus expenses included \$542 for advertising, \$4,415 for insurance, \$15,322 for renting or leasing vehicles or equipment, \$9,344 for repairs and maintenance, \$8,541 for supplies, \$3,011 for utilities, and \$3,207 for gas. By brazenly reporting this phony business loss, LBS claimed a bogus refund of \$10,573 on D.G.'s tax return.

149. Customer M.W. had her 2012 federal income tax return prepared at the LBS store located at 2215 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida. M.W. went to LBS after seeing yard signs near her apartment. M.W. provided LBS with her social security number, last pay stub, and Form W-2. M.W. was employed as a teacher in 2012 and received wages totaling \$27,177. The LBS preparer asked M.W. how much gas she used to go to work and how much she spent on school supplies for her job. LBS then manipulated M.W.'s responses to fraudulently claim that M.W. had a business (not identified by name or type of business on the Schedule C) that had no sales but incurred expenses totaling \$11,670, including for advertising (\$302), renting or leasing vehicles and equipment (\$9,854), and supplies (\$1,514). By reporting this phony business loss, LBS claimed a bogus refund of \$2,776 on M.W.'s tax return.

150. Customer G.W. had his 2012 and 2013 federal income tax returns prepared at the LBS store located at 2215 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida. G.W. was married in 2012 and 2013, and believed that his 2012 and 2013 tax returns were filed with the filing status of married filing separately. However, LBS falsely claimed single filing status on G.W.'s 2012 tax return, and head of household on G.W.'s 2013 tax return. In 2012, G.W. received wages totaling \$32,428. LBS falsely claimed on the Schedule C attached to his return that G.W. had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that had no sales but had expenses totaling \$11,912, including for insurance (\$2,413), renting or leasing vehicles and equipment (\$6,890), repairs and maintenance (\$743), and supplies (\$1,866). G.W. did not have a business in 2012 and 2013, and did not tell the LBS preparer that he had a business. By reporting this phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$4,513 and a bogus refund of \$7,945 on G.W.'s 2012 tax return. Similarly, on G.W.'s 2013 tax return, LBS (identified as AWA Tax Inc. on the return) claimed a phony business on the Schedule C attached to G.W.'s tax return. In 2013, G.W. received wages totaling \$31,118, and pension payments of \$1,322. To fraudulently reduce his taxable income, LBS falsely claimed that G.W. had a business (not identified by name or type of business) that again had no sales, but had expenses totaling \$11,922, including for insurance (\$2,413), renting or leasing business property (\$6,890), repairs and maintenance (\$753), and supplies (\$1,866). By reporting this phony business loss, LBS fraudulently claimed an EITC in the amount of \$4,741 and a bogus refund of \$7,335 on G.W.'s 2013 tax return.

Investigations and Lawsuits have Not Deterred the Defendant

151. Despite knowing of the widespread and pervasive fraudulent conduct surrounding his tax return preparation business, the IRS's examinations of customers' tax returns, lawsuits filed against LBS by the State of Texas and H & R Block, and the well-publicized complaints,

including those by the Better Business Bureau, online consumer protection sites, and various local media outlets throughout the country, Antoine has not taken any meaningful steps to stop the fraud.

152. In fact, the only apparent change in 2014 is that several LBS stores (including Antoine's) began doing business under different names.

153. To the extent that Antoine claims that he does not know of the fraud committed by his LBS stores, his ignorance is deliberate, and he, in furtherance of his own greed, intentionally ignores and turns a blind eye to complaints documenting LBS's fraudulent practices.

154. Antoine has little incentive to stop the wrongdoing because he directly profits from the misconduct at his LBS stores by taking a percentage of all gross revenues. Accordingly, Antoine promotes a culture of greed that favors volume and profits over accuracy and integrity, and creates an environment where fraudulent tax return preparation and violations of federal tax laws flourish.

Harm Caused by the Defendant

155. Antoine's knowledge and encouragement of fraud at his tax return preparation stores, false and misleading statements directed to customers and potential customers, and culture favoring volume and profits over accuracy and integrity, have harmed the public and the United States Treasury. Antoine and many of his managers and preparers prepare false or fraudulent tax returns that understate their customers' correct income tax liabilities and illegally cause customers to incorrectly report their federal tax liabilities and underpay their taxes.

156. The fraudulent practices of Antoine and many of his managers and preparers harm the United States Treasury in the form of lost tax revenue. Based on the IRS's completed

examinations of tax returns prepared at Antoine's LBS stores for tax year 2012, the average tax deficiency per examined tax return, and the total number of 2012 tax returns prepared at Antoine's LBS stores, the IRS estimates the tax loss caused by Antoine's LBS stores for tax year 2012 alone at \$4.6 million or more.

157. Antoine's customers have also been harmed because they relied on LBS to prepare proper tax returns. Instead, customers' tax returns substantially understated their correct tax liabilities after paying unconscionably high fees to have their tax returns prepared. As a result, many customers, who are often low-income taxpayers, now face large income tax debts and may be liable for sizeable penalties and interest.

158. Customers are harmed by the unconscionably high and frequently undisclosed tax preparation fees and related bogus fees tied to anticipated tax refunds. These fees are subtracted from the erroneous refunds that result from LBS's fraudulent tax return preparation. When the IRS conducts audits or examinations of customers and seeks repayment of these erroneous refunds, the customers are liable for the repayment of those refunds. Not only do customers face the hardship associated with repayment of erroneous refunds resulting from LBS's culture of greed at others' expense, but customers may also have to repay the portion of the refund that LBS subtracted for its high fees. Customers may also have to pay additional fees to other tax return preparers who will file correct, accurate amended tax returns to correct the fraudulent tax returns that LBS prepared and filed.

159. Other customers are harmed by LBS's fraudulent practices because they have lost or become ineligible for federal and/or state benefits due to the false claims that LBS made on their tax returns.

160. Antoine's misconduct further harms the United States and the public by requiring the IRS to devote scarce resources to detecting the fraud and assessing and collecting lost tax revenues from defendants' customers. IRS employees have spent thousands of hours conducting audits or reviewing tax returns prepared by LBS and interviewing hundreds of customers. In addition, IRS employees have devoted still more time making compliance visits to various franchises. Consequently, identifying and recovering all lost tax revenues resulting from LBS's fraudulent and illegal activities may be impossible.

161. Antoine's conduct also harms honest tax return preparers who refuse to engage in such illegal conduct. Honest tax return preparers unfairly lose business to LBS as a result of LBS's willingness to break the law. Customers often have their returns prepared with paystubs at LBS because law-abiding preparers do not prepare a tax return without an employer-issued Form W-2. Customers also have their returns prepared at LBS because LBS promises the maximum refund, and delivers by fabricating claims and deductions on customers' returns.

162. Finally, Antoine's misconduct harms the public at large by undermining public confidence in the federal tax system and encouraging widespread violations of the internal revenue laws.

163. The harm to the government and the public will increase unless Antoine is enjoined because—given the seriousness and pervasiveness of their illegal conduct—without an injunction, Antoine is likely to continue enabling the preparation of false and fraudulent federal income tax returns for customers. An injunction will serve the public interest because it will put a stop to Antoine's illegal conduct and the harm that such conduct causes the United States and its citizens.

Count I
Injunction under I.R.C. § 7407

164. Section 7407 of the I.R.C. authorizes a district court to enjoin a tax return preparer from engaging in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. § 6694 or § 6695.

Additionally, if the court finds that a preparer has continually or repeatedly engaged in such conduct, and the court further finds that a narrower injunction (i.e., prohibiting only that specific enumerated conduct) would not be sufficient to prevent that person's interference with the proper administration of the internal revenue laws, the court may enjoin the person from further acting as a tax return preparer. The prohibited conduct justifying an injunction includes, among other things, the following:

- a. Engaging in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. § 6694(a), which penalizes a return preparer who prepares a return or claim for refund that contains an unreasonable position and the return preparer knew (or reasonably should have known) of the position;
- b. Engaging in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. § 6694(b), which among other conduct, penalizes a return preparer who recklessly or intentionally disregards IRS rules or regulations;
- c. Engaging in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. § 6695(g), which penalizes a return preparer who fails to comply with the statutory due diligence requirements;
- d. Guaranteeing the payment of any tax refund or the allowance of any tax credit; or
- e. Engaging in any other fraudulent or deceptive conduct that substantially interferes with the proper administration of the internal revenue laws.

165. Section 7701(a)(36) of the I.R.C. defines tax return preparer to include not only the individual who physically prepares a tax return for compensation, but also anyone "who employs one or more persons" to prepare tax returns for compensation.

166. Antoine, as shown above in paragraphs 1 through 163, is a tax return preparer who has repeatedly and continually prepared or submitted returns or portions of returns (or employed or managed others who prepared or submitted returns or portions of returns) that contain unreasonable positions and substantially understate the liability for tax on the return. Antoine also advises, instructs, directs, and causes his managers, preparers, and employees to engage in tax fraud, and to prepare federal income tax returns asserting unreasonable, unrealistic, frivolous and fraudulent positions. Accordingly, Antoine knew (or reasonably should have known) of the unreasonable, unrealistic, frivolous and fraudulent positions.

167. Antoine and those acting in concert with him and at his direction have continually and repeatedly engaged in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. § 6694 by preparing federal tax returns that understate his customers' liabilities based on unrealistic, frivolous and reckless positions. Antoine, through the actions described above, recklessly or intentionally disregards IRS rules or regulations.

168. Antoine and those acting in concert with him and at his direction have continually and repeatedly engaged in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. § 6695. The Treasury regulations promulgated under I.R.C. § 6695(g) prohibit a return preparer from claiming the EITC without first conducting proper due diligence and documenting his or her compliance with the due diligence requirements. *See* 26 C.F.R. § 1.6995-2 (2011). Antoine advises, encourages, and causes his managers, preparers, and employees to circumvent these due diligence requirements and to ignore or disregard the information provided by customers.

169. Antoine's failure to comply with the due diligence requirements for the EITC violates Treasury Regulations and his willingness to falsify information to obtain the EITC for his customers shows a reckless and/or intentional disregard of IRS rules and regulations.

170. Antoine and those acting in concert with him and at his direction have continually and repeatedly prepared federal income tax returns that claim the EITC for customers where he and those acting in concert with him and at his direction have not conducted, let alone documented, the required due diligence procedures.

171. Antoine also fails to comply with I.R.C. § 6695(a), which requires that a tax return preparer provide a copy of the completed tax return to the taxpayer.

172. Antoine's continual and repeated violations of I.R.C. §§ 6694 and 6695 fall within I.R.C. § 7407(b)(1)(A), and thus are subject to an injunction under I.R.C. § 7407.

173. Antoine's continual and repeated fraudulent or deceptive conduct that substantially interferes with the proper administration of the internal revenue laws falls within I.R.C. § 7407(b)(1)(D), and thus is subject to an injunction under I.R.C. § 7407.

174. Antoine and those acting in concert with him and at his direction have continuously and repeatedly guaranteed refunds to customers and guaranteed the allowance of tax credits, including but not limited to the EITC. This conduct falls within I.R.C. § 7407(b)(1)(C), and thus is subject to an injunction under I.R.C. § 7407.

175. If Antoine is not enjoined from all tax preparation, he and those acting in concert with him and at his direction are likely to continue to prepare and file false and fraudulent tax returns.

176. Antoine's continual and repeated conduct subject to an injunction under I.R.C. § 7407, including his continual and repeated fabrication of expenses and deductions, is so flagrantly illegal and so egregious that it demonstrates that a narrow injunction prohibiting only specific conduct would be insufficient to prevent Antoine's interference with the proper administration of the internal revenue laws. Accordingly, Antoine should be permanently barred

from acting as a federal tax preparer, and from owning, operating, managing, controlling, licensing, franchising, or working for a tax return preparation business.

Count II
Injunction under I.R.C. § 7408

177. Section 7408 of the I.R.C. authorizes a district court to enjoin any person from engaging in conduct subject to penalty under either I.R.C. § 6700 or § 6701 if injunctive relief is appropriate to prevent recurrence of such conduct.

178. Section 6701(a) of the I.R.C. penalizes any person who aids or assists in, procures, or advises with respect to the preparation or presentation of a federal tax return, refund claim, or other document knowing (or having reason to believe) that it will be used in connection with any material matter arising under the internal revenue laws and knowing that if it is so used it will result in an understatement of another person's tax liability. Under I.R.C. § 6701(c)(1), the term "procures" includes "ordering (or otherwise causing) a subordinate to do an act," as well as "knowing of, and not attempting to prevent, participation by a subordinate in an act."

179. Antoine, through the actions detailed above in paragraphs 1 through 163, caused the presentation and preparation of false, fraudulent, and abusive tax returns and other documents. Antoine prepares, assists, and/or advises with respect to the presentation and preparation of federal tax returns for customers that he knows will understate their correct tax liabilities, because Antoine knowingly prepares, assists, and/or advises with respect to the presentation and preparation of returns claiming bogus expenses and deductions. Antoine procured and assisted the preparation of false and fraudulent tax returns by encouraging the filing of tax returns he knew were false or fraudulent, and by employing, training, and supervising tax

return preparers engaging in tax fraud. Antoine's conduct is thus subject to a penalty under I.R.C. § 6701.

180. Antoine is likely to continue violating the law absent an injunction. Tax return preparation is Antoine's primary source of revenue. To maximize that income, Antoine instructs and directs his managers and preparers to prepare fraudulent returns. That fraudulent conduct, in turn, gives Antoine a competitive edge over law-abiding preparers. It also provides a means for Antoine to further exploit his customers by charging them unconscionably high fees, while Antoine's fraud simultaneously and callously exposes his customers to possible civil and criminal liability.

181. If the Court does not enjoin Antoine, he is likely to continue to engage in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. § 6701. Antoine's, and those acting in concert with him and at his direction, preparation of returns claiming improper expenses and deductions is widespread over many customers and tax years. Injunctive relief is therefore appropriate under I.R.C. § 7408.

Count III
Injunction and Disgorgement under I.R.C. § 7402(a)
Necessary to Enforce the Internal Revenue Laws

182. Section 7402 of the I.R.C. authorizes a district court to issue injunctions, orders, judgments, and decrees as may be necessary or appropriate for the enforcement of the internal revenue laws.

183. Antoine, through the actions described above in paragraphs 1 through 163, including, but not limited to, intentionally understating his customers' tax liabilities and charging unconscionable and undisclosed fees for the preparation of federal tax returns that intentionally

understate his customers' tax liabilities, has engaged in conduct that substantially interferes with the enforcement of the internal revenue laws.

184. Unless enjoined, Antoine and those acting in concert with him and at his direction are likely to continue to engage in such improper conduct and interfere with the enforcement of the internal revenue laws. If Antoine is not enjoined from engaging in fraudulent and deceptive conduct, the United States will suffer irreparable injury by wrongfully providing federal income tax refunds to individuals not entitled to receive them.

185. While the United States will suffer irreparable injury if Antoine is not enjoined, Antoine will not be harmed by being compelled to obey the law.

186. Enjoining Antoine is in the public interest because an injunction, backed by the Court's contempt powers if needed, will stop Antoine's illegal conduct and the harm it causes the United States and to his customers.

187. The Court should impose injunctive relief under 26 U.S.C. § 7402(a).

188. Antoine's conduct, which substantially interferes with the enforcement of the internal revenue laws, caused the United States to issue tax refunds to individuals not entitled to receive them, and Antoine has unjustly profited at the expense of the United States by subtracting his exorbitant fees from those refunds.

189. The Court should enter an order under 26 U.S.C. § 7402(a) requiring Antoine to disgorge to the United States the proceeds that Antoine and his businesses received for the preparation of federal tax returns that make false or fraudulent claims.

WHEREFORE, the United States of America prays for the following:

A. That the Court find that Wilfrid Antoine has continually and repeatedly engaged in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. §§ 6694 and 6695, and has continually and repeatedly

engaged in other fraudulent or deceptive conduct that substantially interferes with the administration of the tax laws, and that a narrower injunction prohibiting only this specific misconduct would be insufficient;

B. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. § 7407, enter a permanent injunction prohibiting Wilfrid Antoine from acting as a federal tax return preparer;

C. That the Court find that Wilfrid Antoine has engaged in conduct subject to penalty under I.R.C. § 6701, and that injunctive relief under I.R.C. § 7408 is appropriate to prevent a recurrence of that conduct;

D. That the Court find that Wilfrid Antoine has engaged in conduct that interferes with the enforcement of the internal revenue laws, and that injunctive relief is appropriate to prevent the recurrence of that conduct pursuant to the Court's inherent equity powers and I.R.C. § 7402(a);

E. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. §§ 7402(a), 7407, and 7408, enter a permanent injunction prohibiting Wilfrid Antoine, and all those in active concert or participation with him, from:

- (1) acting as a federal tax return preparer or requesting, assisting in, or directing the preparation or filing of federal tax returns, amended returns, or other related documents or forms for any person or entity other than himself;
- (2) preparing or assisting in preparing federal tax returns that he knows or reasonably should have known would result in an understatement of tax liability or the overstatement of federal tax refund(s) as penalized by I.R.C. § 6694;
- (3) owning, operating, managing, working in, controlling, licensing, consulting with, or franchising a tax return preparation business;

- (4) training, instructing, teaching, and creating or providing cheat sheets, memoranda, directions, instructions, or manuals, pertaining to the preparation of federal tax returns;
- (5) engaging in any other activity subject to penalty under I.R.C. §§ 6694, 6695, 6701, or any other penalty provision in the I.R.C.; and
- (6) engaging in any conduct that substantially interferes with the proper administration and enforcement of the internal revenue laws.

F. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. §§ 7402(a) and 7407, enter an order requiring Wilfrid Antoine to immediately and permanently close, because of the pervasive fraud, all tax return preparation stores that he owns directly or through AWA Tax, Inc., or any other entity, and whether those stores do business as LBS Tax Services or under any other name;

G. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. §§ 7402(a) and 7407, enter an order appointing a receiver to sell all of the hard assets, such as computers (after any and all taxpayer information has been removed), electronics, and furniture, for all tax return preparation stores that Wilfrid Antoine owns directly or through AWA Tax, Inc., or any other entity, and whether those stores do business as LBS Tax Services or under any other name;

H. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. § 7402(a), enter an order prohibiting Wilfrid Antoine, directly or through AWA Tax, Inc., or any other entity, from assigning, transferring, or selling any franchise agreement, independent contractor agreement, or employment contract related to LBS Tax Services or any other tax return preparation business to which he or any entity under his control is a party;

I. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. § 7402(a), enter an order barring Wilfrid Antoine from: (1) selling to any individual or entity a list of customers, or any other customer information, for whom Wilfrid Antoine, LBS Tax Services, and any other business or name through which Antoine or those acting at his direction have at any time since 2009 prepared a tax

return; (2) assigning, disseminating, providing, or giving to any current or former franchisee, General Sales Manager, District Sales Manager, manager, tax return preparer, employee, or independent contractor of Antoine, LBS Tax Services, or any other business through which Antoine prepares tax returns or owns or franchises a tax return preparation business, a list of customers or any other customer information for customers for whom Wilfrid Antoine, LBS Tax Services, and any other business or name through which Antoine or those acting at his direction have at any time since 2009 prepared a tax return; and (3) selling to any individual or entity any proprietary information pertaining to LBS Tax Services and any other business or name through which Antoine or those acting at his direction have at any time since 2009 prepared a tax return;

J. That the Court, pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 7402, enter an order requiring Wilfrid Antoine to disgorge to the United States the proceeds (the amount of which is to be determined by the Court) that Wilfrid Antoine and AWA Tax, Inc. received (in the form of fees) for the preparation of tax returns that make or report false or fraudulent claims, deductions, credits, income, expenses, or other information that results in the understatement of taxes, prepared since 2009 at LBS Tax Services stores owned by Wilfrid Antoine and AWA Tax, Inc.;

K. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. §§ 7402(a) and 7407, enter an order requiring Wilfrid Antoine to contact, within thirty days of the Court's order, by United States mail and, if an e-mail address is known, by e-mail, all persons for whom Wilfrid Antoine and his managers and preparers prepared federal tax returns or claims for a refund for tax years 2008 through 2013 to inform them of the permanent injunction entered against him, including sending a copy of the order of permanent injunction but not enclosing any other documents or enclosures unless agreed to by counsel for the United States or approved by the Court;

L. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. §§ 7402(a), 7407, and 7408, enter an order requiring Wilfrid Antoine to produce to counsel for the United States, within thirty days of the Court's order, a list that identifies by name, social security number, address, e-mail address, and telephone number and tax period(s) all persons for whom Wilfrid Antoine and his managers and preparers prepared federal tax returns or claims for a refund for tax years beginning in 2008 and continuing through this litigation;

M. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. §§ 7402(a), 7407, and 7408, enter an order requiring Wilfrid Antoine to produce to counsel for the United States, within thirty days of the Court's order, a list that identifies by name, address, e-mail address, and telephone number all principals, officers, managers, franchisees, employees, and independent contractors of Antoine, LBS Tax Services, and AWA Tax, Inc., from 2009 to the present;

N. That the Court, pursuant to I.R.C. §§ 7402(a), 7407, and 7408, enter an injunction requiring Wilfrid Antoine to provide a copy of the Court's order to all principals, officers, managers, franchisees, employees, and independent contractors of Antoine, LBS Tax Services, and AWA Tax, Inc., within fifteen days of the Court's order, and provide to counsel for the United States within 30 days a signed and dated acknowledgment of receipt of the Court's order for each person whom Wilfrid Antoine provided a copy of the Court's order;

O. That the Court retain jurisdiction over Wilfrid Antoine and over this action to enforce any permanent injunction entered against him;

P. That the United States be entitled to conduct discovery to monitor Wilfrid Antoine's compliance with the terms of any permanent injunction entered against him; and

Q. That the Court grant the United States such other and further relief, including costs, as is just and reasonable.

DATED: September 23, 2014

WIFREDO A. FERRER
United States Attorney

TAMARA ASHFORD
Acting Assistant Attorney General (Tax Division)

s/ Daniel A. Applegate
DANIEL A. APPLGATE
JOSE A. OLIVERA
STEVEN C. WOODLIFF
JESSICA S. REIMELT
Trial Attorneys, Tax Division
U.S. Department of Justice
P.O. Box 7238, Ben Franklin Station
Washington, D.C. 20044
Telephone: (202) 353-8180
Fax: (202) 514-6770
Daniel.A.Applegate@usdoj.gov