

Montana Board of Public Accountants

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The Honorable Steve Bullock Governor of Montana

Board Members

Dan Vuckovich, CPA, Chairperson
Wayne Hintz, CPA, Secretary
Linda Harris, CPA
Mike Huotte, CPA
Ranetta Jones, CPA
Lucinda "Cindy" Willis, Public Member
Kathleen VanDyke, Public Member

Executive Officer

Grace Berger

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Phishing Scheme Mimics Software Providers Targets Tax Professionals



In mid-August, the IRS alerted tax professionals to an emerging phishing email scam that pretends to be from tax software providers and tries to trick recipients into clicking on a bogus link [IR-2016-103].

The email scheme is the latest in a series of attempts by fraudsters to use the IRS or other tax issues as a cover to trick people into giving up sensitive information such as passwords, Social Security numbers, or credit card numbers or to make unnecessary payments.

In the new scheme identified as part of the IRS Security Summit process, tax professionals are receiving emails pretending to be from tax software companies.

The email scheme requests the recipient to download and install an important software update via a link included in the email.

Once recipients click on the embedded link, they are directed to a website prompting them to download a file appearing to be an update of their software package.

The file has a naming convention that uses the actual name of their software followed by an ".exe extension."

Upon completion, tax professionals believe they have downloaded a software update when in fact they have loaded a program designed to track the tax professional's key strokes, which is a common tactic used by cyber thieves to steal login information, passwords and other sensitive data.

A MEMBER OF
NASBA

[Read more on the Phishing Scheme on Page 3](#)

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR: ADAPTING TO CHANGES IN THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION

On June 16, 2016 the members of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) were asked to vote on a proposal to form a new association that would allow all members of the AICPA and CIMA to automatically become members of the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants (notice the initials of this new association, AICPA, no confusion there). The results were the AICPA ballot passed 86.5 percent to 13.5 percent and CIMA members also endorsed the proposal 89.7 percent to 10.3 percent. Interesting point is that only 15 percent of the AICPA membership actually voted on this proposal.



*Dan Vuckovich, CPA
Chair*

Both AICPA and CIMA say that the new association will represent more than 600,000 current and future accounting professionals and will raise the profile of the CPA and Charter Global Management Accountants (CGMA, CIMA's designation for their members) designations in the U.S. and abroad. Prior to this vote in October of 2015, the AICPA's governing Council overwhelmingly voted to give qualified professionals in the United States, besides CPAs, a pathway to obtain the Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) designation. What this means is you no longer have to be a CPA to receive the CGMA designation in the United States. The AICPA believes that the first non-CPA to be awarded a CGMA designation will likely happen in 2018.

You may ask why we at the Board of Public Accountants would care about these changes. Well the Board's primary purpose is to protect the public and regulate the accounting profession in Montana using the professional standards and Montana laws and regulations. The Board is concerned that the CGMA designation for those who are not also CPAs may be confusing to the public and that for a non-CPA to use the CGMA designation under current Montana statute is a violation.

Under Montana statute 37-50-301. Illegal use of title. (4) A person or firm may not assume or use the title or designation "certified accountant", "**chartered accountant**", "enrolled accountant", "licensed accountant", "registered accountant", or any other title or designation likely to be confused with "certified public accountant", "licensed certified public accountant", or any abbreviations likely to be confused with "CPA". However, a foreign accountant may use the title under which the foreign accountant is generally known in the foreign country, followed by the name of the country from which the foreign accountant's certificate, license, or degree was received, and a person who is licensed as an enrolled agent by the internal revenue service may use the title "enrolled agent" or the abbreviation "EA".

The Board has sent a letter to the AICPA letting them know that we concluded that it would be a violation of Montana statute for a non-CPA to use the CGMA designation in Montana. We have not received any response from the AICPA regarding this concern yet. However, according to the AICPA website they have acknowledged that they will have to reach out to state boards of accountancy and state CPA societies to assess where there may be a need to clarify statutes. NASBA and the AICPA are discussing alternative language that can be made to the Uniform Accounting Act (UAA) to help States resolve legislative barriers to the Non-CPA, CGMA designation, should states choose to do so.

Change will always be part of life and we know the accounting profession is going to experience change, however, we just want to make sure the public understands how these changes could affect them. The Board would be interested in your opinion on this matter so please share any thoughts you may have on this issue.

Sincerely,

Dan Vuckovich, CPA, Chair

Officers and Committee Members

At their May 10th & 11th board meeting, the Board of Public Accountants elected their officers for FY2017. The new standing committee appointments are made by the new Chair.

Dan Vuckovich, CPA, Great Falls
Chair

Wayne Hintz, CPA, Helena
Secretary

Mr. Vuckovich has made the following standing committee appointments:

Screening Panel

Kathleen VanDyke – Chair

Linda Harris, CPA, Absarooke

Dan Vuckovich, CPA, Great Falls

Wayne Hintz, CPA, Helena

Adjudication Panel

Mike Huotte, CPA, Anaconda
– Chair

Ranetta Jones, CPA, Billings

Cindy Willis, Polson

Budget & Finance Committee

Mike Huotte, CPA, Anaconda –
Chair

Ranetta Jones, CPA, Billings

PROC (Peer Review Oversight Committee)

Dan Vuckovich, CPA, Great Falls

Michael John, CPA – Deer Lodge

PHISHING SCHEME (CONTINUED)

Although the IRS knows of only a handful of cases to date, tax professionals are encouraged to be on the lookout for these scams and never to click on unexpected links in emails.

Similar email schemes using tax software names have targeted individual taxpayers.

The IRS recently launched a new campaign to raise awareness among tax professionals about security thefts posed by identity theft issues targeting their industry.

The "Protect Your Clients; Protect Yourself" campaign features an ongoing effort to urge tax professionals to step up their security protections and be aware they increasingly are targets of cyber criminals.

The IRS urges all tax preparers to take the following steps:

- Be alert for phishing scams: do not click on links or open attachments contained in emails and always utilize a software provider's main webpage for connecting to them.
- Run a security "deep scan" to search for viruses and malware;
- Strengthen passwords for both computer access and software access; make sure your password is a minimum of 8 digits long (more is better) with a mix of numbers, letters, and special characters;
- Educate all staff members about the dangers of phishing scams in the form of emails, texts, and calls;
- Review any software that your employees use to remotely access your network and/or your IT support vendor uses to remotely troubleshoot technical problems and support your systems. Remote access software is a potential target for bad actors to gain entry and take control of a machine.

Tax professionals should review Publication 4557, "Safeguarding Taxpayer Data, A Guide for Your Business," which provides a checklist to help safeguard taxpayer information and enhance office security.

HARRIS ELECTED AFWA PRESIDENT

Linda Harris, CPA, has been elected to serve as the 2016-2017 Accounting & Financial Women's Alliance (AFWA) National President.

Linda joined the Billings Chapter of AFWA as a student member in 1992. At the Chapter level she has served on most committees and was Chapter President. Linda joined the National Foundation Board and was chair from 2005-2007. Linda is a CPA with her own practice in Absarokee, MT. She does taxes for individuals and corporations, small businesses financials and non-profit work. She also does bookkeeping and payroll.

Linda currently serves on the Board of Public Accountants, originally appointed in 2009 by Governor Brian Schweitzer. She was reappointed for a second term by Governor Steve Bullock.

We congratulate Linda on her latest accomplishment.



Linda Harris

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Governor Steve Bullock announced the appointment of two new members to the Board of Public Accountants.

Ranetta Jones, CPA is a Billings native. She graduated from MSU-B and received her CPA license in 1992. Ranetta worked for Jackson, Fekety, & Odle, a small public accounting firm for 19 years, focusing on business and personal tax, small to medium business operational accounting including accounting software support, trust and estate tax and non-profits including audits.

For the past 11 years, she has worked for Stillwater Mining Company, one of the State's largest companies. Currently she is the tax analyst, primarily responsible for US, Montana, Canadian, Argentinian, and Chilean income taxation in addition to property tax and mining severance taxes. She is the lead on ASC 740, tax provisioning, and works closely with accounting and financial reporting personnel at Stillwater to provide SEC and SOX audit support. She works with treasury and investment administration and business insurance procurement.

Ranetta is a member of MSCPA, AICPA, and AFWA, where she has served as a National committee member, local Chapter President, and Regional Conference Organizer. Her involvement in the community includes Treasurer of the Community Crime Prevention Council in Billings, President of the Big Sky Exchange Club, and has taught Sunday School and AWANA for over a decade.

She and her husband Al still reside in Billings with their Corgi.

Lucinda "Cindy" Willis was appointed as a public member to the Board. Cindy and her husband Jim have lived in Polson for over 40 years. She has held a real estate broker license since 1994.

Although partially retired from real estate, she continues to represent buyers in their real estate transactions. Cindy serviced on the Board of Realty Regulation for eight years, including serving as chair.

For many years, Cindy has been involved in community service, serving the Lake County Tax Appeal Board, Kiwanis Club of Polson, Committee for the Arts, the Mission Valley Leaders in Action, Lake County Red Cross, Lake County Community Development Corporation, The Polson Community Development Agency, and various real estate organizations. In her free time Cindy enjoys traveling, reading and writing fiction, gardening and being outdoors.

Getting Ready for Renewal

Renewal time is right around the corner. Now is the time to check your online licensing account (this is different than your CPE tracking account) to ensure you can renew online.

If you have recently verified your account information, you are all set. If not, please go to the [website](#) and log in. If you can log in, select the Professional & Occupational Licensing tab. If you see your CPA license, you are ready to renew beginning November 2nd.

If you do not know your login information or do not see your license once you have accessed your account, please email dlibsdr renewal@mt.gov. Provide your name as it appears on your license and your license number. The Renewal Unit will provide your login information to you.

RENEWALS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

It is the time of year to start thinking about the upcoming renewal of your CPA license and annual firm registration. The CPA license and firm registration renewal deadline is December 31st. All licensees are required to renew by the deadline or late renewal fees will be assessed. There is no fee for annual firm registration, but the deadline is December 31.

A firm, not each office location, is required to annually register with the Board. During the firm registration process, each firm will be asked to list all satellite offices in the State. Each office is no longer required to register.

The online renewal system will be available to begin renewing on Wednesday, November 2nd. You can begin renewing at

that time. In mid-November you will receive the only renewal reminder this year for each license/firm. If you receive a notice for each firm office, only register the firm ONCE and list the other locations as satellite offices.

If you receive more than one renewal reminder per license, it is because we have more than one account for you. You will need to contact Licensing Unit A at 406-444-6880 to have the excess account(s) disabled. PLEASE NOTE, a separate renewal reminder will be sent for the firm. Again, the firm is only required to register once, and other locations will be listed as a satellite office.

Active licensees, make sure you meet the current CPE requirement of 120 hours, with at least 2 hours of ethics, within the reporting period of January 1, 2014-December 31, 2016. Maintaining your CPE on the CPE tracking system website will assist you in complying with the CPE requirements. If you obtained your original Montana license in 2014 or after, you are not required to meet the CPE requirements this year.

It is important that you follow the instructions to renew your license or register the firm, and to timely comply with all requirements. If you find yourself lacking CPE toward the end of the year, you can file for an extension or a hardship exception using the form located on the Board website under the Forms/General Forms tab. You must submit this request prior to December 31 in order to renew your license on active status. The Board will consider your request and make a determination at their January meeting, but the form must be received prior to the renewal deadline for the Board to consider granting the extension/exception. The Board can only grant an exception for individual hardship. An extension can be requested for any reason.

Steps to Renew Online

- Step 1** Access our website.
- Step 2** Log in using your user name and the password you created previously. If you don't remember your password you can use the "I've forgotten my password" link and you will be sent a temporary password. Enter the temporary password and follow the instructions to update your password. DO NOT create a new account. You already have one.
- Step 3** Click on the "Professional and Occupational Licensing" tab. You will see your records. Find your license and to the right under "Action" click "Renew License."
- Step 4** Follow the instructions on the screen. You can pay for your renewal by e-check, American Express, Visa or MasterCard.
- Step 5** Print your renewed license. You're done!

NASBA NAMES 2016 ACCOUNTING EDUCATION RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS

MORE THAN \$24,000 IN FUNDING AWARDED TO UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

The National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) is pleased to announce the recipients of its Accounting Education Research Grants Program for 2016. Faculty and postdoctoral researchers from three U.S. institutions will be awarded research grants totaling \$24,500. This year's Accounting Education Research Grant recipients include:



“Accreditation and CPA Exam Performance: An Examination of Gender and Race”

Submitted by:

Adrian L. Mayse, Assistant Professor

Institution:

Howard University (Washington, DC)

Grant Amount: \$9,000



“Strategies to Help Students in a Minority University Achieve Success in the Accounting Profession and Help to Diversify the Accounting Pipeline”

Submitted by:

Kamala Raghavan, Associate Professor,
Accounting and Finance

Institution:

Texas Southern University (Houston, TX)

Grant Amount: \$9,000



“Is Being Selective and Attuned to Top Quality Students All That Matter? The Impact on CPA Exam Performance by Student Characteristics, Accounting Program Quality, and Delays in Test Taking”

Submitted by:

Nathan H. Jeppson, Assistant Professor of
Accounting and Mary B. Burns, Assistant
Professor of Accounting

Institution:

Montana State University (Bozeman, MT)

Grant Amount: \$6,500

“NASBA is again pleased to provide researchers with needed funding to conduct research on critical topics impacting the accounting profession. We look forward to learning more about the findings from these three projects once completed,” said Alfonso Alexander, Chief Relationship Officer of NASBA.

Spearheaded by NASBA's Education Committee, the program was established in an effort to advance research on educational matters impacting certificated public accountants (CPAs), the public accounting profession, and State Boards of Accountancy's charge to protect the public.

The Committee has upheld its annual charge by awarding grants to professors and postdoctoral researchers since 2011. Since the program's initial launch, more than \$124,000 has been awarded to academics representing a total of 24 U.S. institutions. Findings from the 2016 grant recipients will be presented during the 2017 NASBA Regional Meetings.

For those interested in being considered for funding in 2017, grant proposals will be accepted August 8, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

To learn more about the Accounting Education Research Grants Program and to view a listing of past recipients, click the button below.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROGRAM