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THE TAX LAWYER

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## Man Chokes H&R Block Tax Preparer As Block Settles Disability Case

Who isn't unhappy with their taxes? Paying them is never fun. Even dealing with the paperwork can be downright stressful. But please, don't beat up your tax preparer! It's one thing to wring your hands over your taxes, or perhaps even to curse a bit.

But this customer took his frustration out physically over his tax return. Police arrested and charged an H&R Block customer with assault. Kirkwood, Missouri is a suburb of St. Louis, and the local police arrested Michael Wright, 53, who admitted assaulting an H&R Block employee. Mr. Wright was so upset about his taxes that he pushed his tax man to the ground and tried to choke him. [Police: Kirkwood man choked tax preparer over tax filings.](#)

Mr. Wright now faces a third degree assault charge. Although H&R Block didn't comment on the unfortunate story, Block is simultaneously in the news for a second reason over a disability deal it has reached with the Justice Department. The deal is to remedy alleged violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



H&R Block (Photo credit: qnr)

The deal resolves the government's allegations that individuals with disabilities have been denied full and equal enjoyment of H&R Block's tax-preparation goods and services. The alleged problems involve H&R Block's website [www.hrblock.com](http://www.hrblock.com) and its mobile applications. H&R Block is one of the largest tax return preparers in the United States. When you think of Block, you may think of the walk-in stores like the Kirkwood, Missouri location.

However, the company has taken advantage of the Internet in a big way. It offers a wide range of services, including professional and do-it-yourself tax preparation, instructional videos, office location information, interactive live video conference and chat with tax professionals. It offers online and in-store services and electronic tax-return filing. On Dec. 11, 2013, the DOJ's Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts filed a complaint in intervention in *National Federal of the Blind (NFB) et al. v. HRB Digital LLC et al.* to enforce Title III of the ADA.

A complaint alleged that H&R Block failed to code its website to make it accessible to individuals with vision, hearing and physical disabilities. Under the terms of the five-year decree, H&R Block's website, tax filing utility and mobile apps will conform to the Level AA Success Criteria of the Web Content

Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. These recognized international industry standards for web accessibility [can be found online](#) and are available to help companies ensure that individuals with disabilities can fully and equally enjoy web-based goods and services.

According to the decree, the H&R Block website will be accessible for the start of the next tax filing term on Jan. 1, 2015, with additional accessibility deadlines over the following years. H&R Block will also pay \$45,000 to the two individual plaintiffs in the case, plus pay a \$55,000 civil penalty. A copy of the consent decree can be seen on the [ADA website](#).

But however you access H&R Block's services—or whoever your tax preparer may be—take a deep breath and try to get through this tax filing season without getting arrested.

*You can reach me at [Wood@WoodLLP.com](mailto:Wood@WoodLLP.com). This discussion is not intended as legal advice, and cannot be relied upon for any purpose without the services of a qualified professional.*