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THE TAX LAWYER

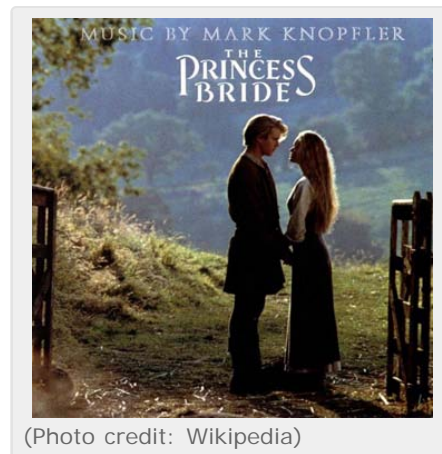
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Tax Man Chases Dread Pirate Roberts (Like A Rodent Of Unusual Size)

[Cary Elwes](#)' defining role was as Robin Wright Penn's beloved farm boy Westley in [The Princess Bride](#). He morphed from farm boy into [Dread Pirate Roberts](#) and managed to survive due in part to his immunity to [Locane Powder](#).

Unfortunately, it appears that the actor isn't immune to tax liens or to the tax problems they evidence. In fact, tax collectors in the Golden State claim Elwes hasn't paid his state taxes since 2009 and now owes \$26,207.82. See [Princess Bride Star Cary Elwes Running From The Tax Man](#). There are suggestions Elwes has other debts too.

A tax lien is hardly as scary as [RODENTS OF UNUSUAL SIZE](#), and things can fall through the cracks. This may sound like a minor tax debt, but California tax authorities want their money. Of course, Elwes clearly isn't the first celebrity to be caught in the tax crosshairs. Even big names like [Martin Scorsese](#) (\$2.85 million) and [Al Pacino](#) (\$188,000) have faced tax liens, although both their oops tax problems were tied to convicted celebrity accountant [Kenneth Starr](#). See [Scorsese, Pacino Whacked by IRS Tax Liens](#).



Sometimes tax liens are even wrong. See [Dionne Warwick Proves IRS Tax Liens Can Be Wrong](#). Most of the time, though, tax liens are steps in the tax collection process and eventually lead to payment. The IRS and the states can file liens and any lien can be significant. A tax lien against Rapper Flavor Flav said he owed nearly \$1 million for 2004 through 2006. See [Rapper Flavor Flav Gets Bitter Taste Of IRS Lien](#).

The IRS can file a [Notice of Federal Tax Lien](#) only after making an assessment, sending a Notice and Demand for Payment and remaining unpaid. Tax liens put the world on notice and can tie up all your property even property you acquire later. Liens impact your credit and can last ten years. A tax lien doesn't mean there will be a levy or sale.

But it does mean you'll probably end up paying. If the lien is a mistake, get it addressed. If you owe the taxes, pay it off if you can so you can get the lien removed. See [IRS "Fresh Start" for Tax Liens and Installment Deals?](#) Getting a lien released usually involves paying the tax, interest and penalties; or posting a bond to guaranty payment. See [IRS Publication 1450, Request for Release of Federal Tax Lien](#).

Tax lien problems seem common with entertainers like the King of R&B R. Kelly, who owed more than [\\$5 million in unpaid taxes](#), IRS says. See [IRS Wants \\$5 Million From Singer R. Kelly](#). But even Newt Gingrich once had lien issues. See [Tax Liens and Newt Gingrich](#). Tax liens are never welcome, but like the [Fire Swamp](#), you can navigate your way through.

*Robert W. Wood practices law with [Wood LLP](#), in San Francisco. The author of more than 30 books, including *Taxation of Damage Awards & Settlement Payments* (4th Ed. 2009 with 2012 Supplement, [Tax Institute](#)), he can be reached at 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.*