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Apply For A Passport? IRS Will Know

If you apply for a passport, the IRS will know. It's not clear how the IRS uses this data, although my guess is for data verification plus perhaps information gathering for later collection efforts. The IRS has released proposed regulations to ramp up the information the IRS receives to better enforce the tax laws. These rules are only proposed and don't take legal effect until finalized.



Green Card Too. Anyone who applies for a U.S. passport or to renew one must include certain tax information with the application. Ditto for U.S. permanent resident status (green card). Some of these rules date to 1992, but they've been superseded with an expanded list of information including the applicant's:

- Full name and, where applicable, previous name;
- Address of regular or principal place of residence within the country of residence and, if different, mailing address;
- Taxpayer identification number (TIN)—for most of us, that means your social security number; and
- Date of birth. See [Proposed Regulation Section 301.6039E-1\(b\)\(1\)](#).

This information must be submitted with the passport application. There are penalties if you don't. The IRS can impose a \$500 penalty on any passport applicant who fails to provide it.

Who Cares? A common question is whether the IRS can prevent someone from getting a passport or a green card. For example, what if you have a large outstanding tax bill when you apply for a passport, perhaps even a [tax lien](#) or garnishment?

I've yet to encounter this and suspect the IRS takes no action. True, the IRS and the Department of Justice cooperate to catch tax cheats, including having notorious tax scofflaws arrested if they land on U.S. soil. See Government Accountability Office Report: [Potential For Using Passport Issuance to Increase Collection of Unpaid Taxes](#). It's also true that when someone is being prosecuted they may have to give up their passport.

Famously, Wesley Snipes had his passport [cancelled](#) after he violated his parole while appealing his conviction for [tax evasion](#). If he had applied for a new one, presumably he would have been turned down. But beyond extreme fact patterns like that, I wouldn't worry.

Remember, if you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident you are required to report your worldwide income even if it's taxed somewhere else. You also must disclose foreign accounts and assets. See [New IRS Offshore Amnesty Announced: Third Time's A Charm](#).

For more, see:

[U.S. Issues Passports To Thousands Of Tax Cheats](#)

[Tax Evader? No Passport For You](#)

[Primer For First Time FBAR Filers](#)

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