

## **Program Implemented to Assist Counties in Collecting Fines Owed to County Courts**

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In the 2015 the general assembly passed HB 1000, which was introduced by Representative Barry Fleming of the 121<sup>st</sup>. This bill created a mechanism for counties to intercept state income tax refunds for individuals owing fines to local courts. The Tax Refund Intercept Program (TRIP) began operation as a pilot in 2016 and became a full program and open to all courts in 2017. Currently there are 19 courts across the state that are participating and are successfully intercepting state tax refunds to pay outstanding fines.

TRIP is offered by the Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Revenue and provides a low cost, low maintenance means to enforce monetary judgements in county courts. TRIP serves as a clearing house for courts that prepare, certify and submit income tax refund intercept request to satisfy unpaid fines and fees. At the end of each tax season, the amounts successfully collected by the Department of Revenue are sent electronically to the account designated by the county court. The court has seven years from the date of the judgement before the intercept request expires, so money could be received over several years until the full fine is paid.

TRIP doesn't just collect unpaid fines and fees from state income tax returns. The program serves as an incentive to debtors to pay the debt directly to the court. Tens of thousands of dollars in unpaid fines and fees have been paid directly to the court by debtors in response to the intercept notice, which allows one final opportunity to pay the debt to the court.

Applications to participate in TRIP are accepted throughout the year; and courts are added on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information email [TRIP@georgiacourts.org](mailto:TRIP@georgiacourts.org), visit the website at [trip.georgiacourts.gov](http://trip.georgiacourts.gov), or you may call (404) 463-3808 for more information.