

Maryland Comptroller's Office Comes to Paley Rothman!

By Jeffrey Kolender

Paley Rothman was honored to host a lively question and answer lunch with Maryland Comptroller, Peter Franchot along with several other officials from the Comptroller's office on Friday, June 5. Comptroller Franchot and his colleagues graciously answered many questions raised by the attorneys here.

The Comptroller addressed the cyber security steps his office is taking, especially in light of the recent news about the IRS computers being hacked. He said his office has made unprecedented investments in technology to detect and prevent fraud, and employs a highly-skilled team of tax professionals dedicated to fraud detection. Over the past eight years, the Comptroller's Office has successfully stopped nearly \$130 million in undeserved refunds.

Taxpayers can review the Maryland Attorney General's website to see some steps to take to prevent identity theft. If you suspect identity theft, you can call (410) 576-6491, or send an e-mail to idtheft@aog.state.md.us.

Comptroller Franchot emphasized his goal of ensuring that his office provides timely, effective customer service through what he calls the Three R's – **Respect, Responsiveness** and **Results**. He said, along with technology and online tools, his office helps taxpayers the old fashioned way: through 12 branch offices and the call center, where nearly 500,000 calls were answered in calendar year 2014 alone. He invited Maryland residents to contact his office with any questions. Visit the Comptroller's website to find the appropriate phone number to call for your specific question.

Comptroller Franchot has made getting tax refunds to taxpayers as securely and quickly as possible a top priority. E-filing significantly expedites refunds and approximately 90% of Maryland residents are now being filed electronically. As a result, the average income tax refund is now received within 2.1 business days!

We appreciate the insights shared by Comptroller Franchot, Director of Compliance Sharonne Bonardi, Director of the Bureau of Revenue Estimates Andy Schaufele, Estate Tax Unit Attorney Laura Thomas and Assistant Comptroller Joe Shapiro and look forward to a continued dialogue with the Comptroller's office.