



# TRS Newspaper

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## In Celebrity Tax Case, IRS Demonstrates Enforcement

**Actor Wesley Snipes is headed to prison for three years after being convicted of tax charges. His case should leave little doubt that the IRS is pursuing taxpayers big and small**

Wesley Snipes is going to prison.

For three years.

For tax violations.

You know who I'm talking about. Snipes, the star of *Blade* and *White Men Can't Jump*, was convicted of willfully failing to pay taxes on \$38 million of income for the tax years 1999 to 2001.

After a judge rejected his appeal, Snipes was ordered to turn himself into federal authorities and begin his three-year prison sentence.

People who track tax protestors — the folks who cite various, and erroneous, reasons for why you don't have to pay income taxes or file an income tax return — followed Snipes' indictment and trial closely.

Here was a well-known celebrity who made millions, and he appeared to follow the bad advice of tax protestors.

But as Snipes discovered, Americans do have to pay taxes and file returns, and the punishment for not doing so can be severe.

Snipes' case, of course, is a unique one. He's a movie star who owed millions. The Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Department of Justice couldn't allow him to defy the law so openly.

But in my opinion, everyday taxpayers should take note of Snipes' case.

I've met too many taxpayers who find themselves in deep trouble with the IRS because they followed bad tax advice. Sure, most of these taxpayers were never in as deep as Snipes — but they were in deep enough to have the IRS knocking at their door.

As Snipes and many of my previous clients demonstrate, smart people can be lured to follow bad advice. It's even easier to be lured in when you think that advice will let you keep more of your hard-earned money.

But as this year draws to a close and you begin to think about how you want 2011 to be, take a long, hard look at your finances and your tax troubles.

While you might not be looking at three years in lockup, as Wesley Snipes is, you still could face major IRS problems if you owe a significant amount to the government or you have participated in any sort of tax shelters or frivolous tax arguments.

I'll tell you now what I've told every client whose come to me with IRS problems: The best strategy in dealing with the IRS is to come forward, fess up, and make amends.

The IRS isn't some evil organization. It's made up of people, and those people often are willing to work with taxpayers who want to straighten out tax debt and do so in an honest manner.

Really, working with the IRS is the best method to getting rid of IRS problems.

The best time to get started is right now, and if you want to get started, you should contact a qualified tax professional.

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