

# Sheriff wants tax refunds withheld for warrants

County would be first to withhold money for outstanding arrest warrants

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Tax refunds would be withheld from anyone with an outstanding arrest warrant under a bill supported by Anne Arundel County's chief law enforcement officer.

County Sheriff Ronald S. Bateman last week asked the county delegation in the General Assembly to work to pass the bill. The measure would make Anne Arundel the first jurisdiction in the state where defendants with outstanding arrest warrants could not receive a state tax refund until they had cleared up their warrants.

"The bill uses the almighty dollar to get people to come in and take care of their arrest warrants," Bateman said.

The withholding of tax refunds would induce defendants with outstanding warrants for minor crimes to come to the sheriff's office and "clear up the warrant," Bateman said.

The county has about 8,000 outstanding arrest warrants. About half are for people who live

outside the county. Because the refund-withholding provisions would apply only to county residents, the out-of-county residents would not be covered.

The bill under consideration would not apply to defendants filing taxes jointly, since an innocent party would be affected by the process. Also, the law would not supersede child support laws. Currently, in child support cases, a tax refund is withheld and goes to support the child.

Some delegation members expressed concern about the bill.

"I don't understand the connection between money and a warrant," Del. Tony McConkey, R-Severna Park, said. "I'm afraid of innocent people being caught up in the dragnet."

Bateman said the new law would apply only to people who have outstanding criminal arrest warrants.

Scott Shaffer, a member of the county Republican Central Committee, testified against the bill.

"I don't think this fights crime, I think it just adds bureaucracy," Shaffer said. "We are talking about people's tax refunds. We are talking about people's private property."

The county delegation has not voted whether to work for the bill's passage.



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