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Restructure and Reform Act – 1998

When the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act was enacted in 1998, lawmakers ordered the agency to focus more on taxpayer rights instead of collection activities. Not surprisingly, the number of audits -- or examinations, as the agency prefers to call them -- dropped dramatically.

The first year of the kinder, gentler IRS, about 1 in 79 tax returns were audited. By 2003, it was even easier for tax scofflaws; that year, according to IRS data, only 1 in 150 individual taxpayers were audited.

— Article by Kay Bell, contributing tax editor for Bankrate.com.