



Written by [Ron Paul](#) on December 7, 2015

## Will the IRS Take Your Passport?

A little-noticed provision in the highway funding bill Congress passed this week threatens a right most Americans take for granted: the right to travel abroad. The provision in question gives the Internal Revenue Service the authority to revoke the passport of anyone the IRS claims owes more than \$50,000 in back taxes.

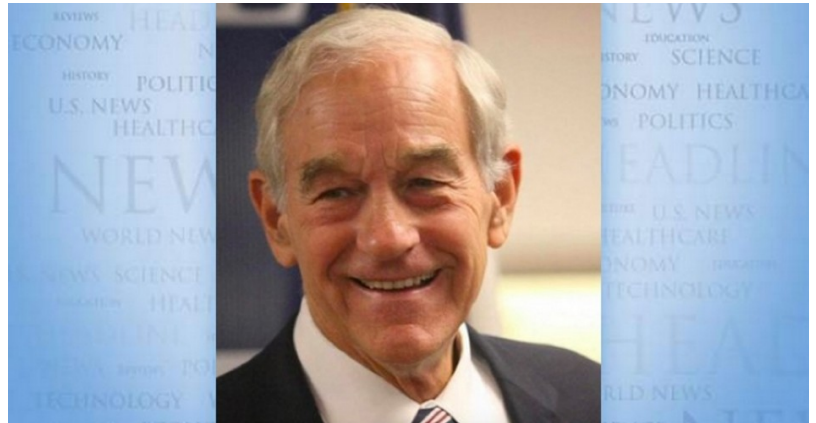
Congress is giving the IRS this new power because a decline in gas tax receipts has bankrupted the federal highway trust fund. Of course, Congress would rather squeeze more money from the American people than reduce spending, repeal costly regulations, or return responsibility for highway construction to the states, local governments, and the private sector. On the other hand, most in Congress fear the political consequences of raising gas, or other, taxes. Giving the IRS new powers allows politicians to increase government revenue without having to increase tax rates. Some even brag about how they are “cracking down on tax cheats.”

Pro-IRS politicians ignore how this new power will punish Americans who have actually paid all the taxes they are legally obligated to pay. This is because the provision does not provide taxpayers an opportunity to challenge a finding that they owe back taxes in federal court before their passport is revoked. Because IRS employees are not infallible, it is inevitable that many Americans will lose their right to travel because of a bureaucrat’s mistake.

It is particularly odd that a Republican Congress would give this type of power to the IRS considering the continuing outrage over IRS targeting of “Tea Party” organizations. This is hardly the first time the IRS has been used to intimidate its opponents and/or powerful politicians. Presidents of both parties have used the IRS to target political enemies.

For example, one of the articles of impeachment brought against Richard Nixon dealt with his attempt to have the IRS audit those Nixon perceived as political enemies. During the 1990s, an IRS agent allegedly told the head of an organization supporting then-President Bill Clinton’s impeachment, “What do you expect when you target the President?” Can anyone doubt that some Americans will be targeted because an IRS bureaucrat does not approve of their political beliefs and activities?

Some support giving the IRS new powers because they think that those who underpay their taxes somehow raise everyone else’s taxes. This argument assumes that the federal government must collect the maximum amount of taxes because the people cannot do without big government. Of course the





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truth is that the people would be better off without the welfare-warfare state. Wouldn't we be better off without a national health care program that increases health care costs, or without a war on terrorism that led to the rise of ISIS? Freeing the people from taxation, including the regressive and hidden inflation tax, is just one of the many ways the people will benefit from restoring constitutionally limited government.

As the federal debt increases and the American economy declines, an increasingly desperate Congress will look for new ways to squeeze more revenue from taxpayers. Thus, the IRS will increasingly gain new and ever more tyrannical powers over Americans, including new restrictions on the right to travel or even move capital out of the country. The only way to end the IRS's assault on our liberties is for the people to force Congress to stop looking for new ways to pick our pockets, and instead usher in a new era of liberty, peace, and prosperity by demolishing the welfare-warfare state.

*Ron Paul is a former U.S. congressman from Texas. This article originally appeared at the [Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity](#) and is reprinted here with permission.*



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