



IRS Still Targeting Tea Party Groups

The *Washington Examiner* [reported](#) that an IRS agent told congressional investigators that the agency is still discriminating against Tea Party and conservative groups applying for 501(c)(4) tax-exempt status, despite long-standing claims by the Obama administration that the discrimination ended in May 2012.



The August 9 *Examiner* [article](#) by Paul Bedard cites an unnamed IRS agent being interviewed by the House Ways and Means Committee, who admits that he is still under direction to single out conservative groups for extra scrutiny from his supervisor:

Committee: If you saw — I am asking this currently, if today if a Tea Party case, a group — a case from a Tea Party group came in to your desk, you reviewed the file and there was no evidence of political activity, would you potentially approve that case? Is that something you would do?

IRS agent: At this point I would send it to secondary screening, political advocacy.

Committee: So you would treat a Tea Party group as a political advocacy case even if there was no evidence of political activity on the application. Is that right?

IRS agent: Based on my current manager's direction, uh-huh.

The U.S. House Ways and Means Committee has yet to make public the transcript quoted above.

Denial — or even delay — of a tax-exempt application can mean the loss of tens of thousands of dollars (or even more) in donations and grants to a non-profit organization, as most corporations and foundations will not donate to organizations without IRS tax-exempt approval. Discrimination against groups with “Tea Party,” “Patriot,” and “9/12” in their names — a fact acknowledged by the IRS between 2010 and 2012 — could easily have been deployed as a political tactic to strangle the Tea Party financially in its infancy.

President Obama [labeled](#) the IRS scandal and others on June 27 “an endless parade of distractions, political posturing and phony scandals.” House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-Mich.) [told](#) the *Examiner* of the continued IRS discrimination against conservatives, “It is outrageous that IRS management continues to target Tea Party cases without any justification. The harassment, abuse and delays these Americans have faced over the last few years has been unwarranted, unprovoked and, at times, possibly illegal. The fact that the IRS still continues to treat the Tea Party differently and subject them to additional targeting is outrageous and it must stop immediately.”

The new revelations flatly contradict past claims from the Obama administration that the IRS discrimination against Tea Party groups ended more than a year ago. Obama Press Spokesman Jay Carney categorically [claimed](#) May 20 that “the misconduct had stopped in May of 2012. So despite all the media interest in our April 2013 awareness, it’s important to remember that the misconduct, of course, had stopped almost a year earlier.”



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on August 9, 2013

Of course, Carney's position was contradicted by the administration's own appointed acting commissioner within a month of Carney's statement. "When I got to the IRS, we started a more comprehensive review of the operations of this part of the IRS," IRS Acting Commissioner Danny Werfel [told](#) reporters in June, a month after the Obama administration's public claims that the IRS discrimination had ended. "And we did determine and discover that there are other BOLO lists in place. And, upon discovering that, we also found that we believe there continued to be inappropriate or questionable criteria on these BOLO lists." Werfel, who took the acting director position a month earlier, did not elaborate at the time about what those be-on-the-look-out (BOLO) lists were. He later exonerated the IRS from any willful misconduct in the tax exempt division of the IRS.

The *Washington Examiner* story is the latest wrinkle in the wrangling between the Obama White House and congressional investigators, as the latter have accused the White House of stonewalling their investigation. In an August 6 [op-ed](#) in the *Washington Post*, Chairmen Darrell Issa (Oversight and Reform) and Dave Camp (Ways and Means) argued:

During the 27 months during which the IRS did not approve one application for tax-exempt status from a tea party group, the agency approved "perhaps dozens of applications from similar liberal and progressive groups," according to a review by *USA Today*... "The administration's own partisan anti-tea party rhetoric, its evolving and inconsistent explanations and the IRS's own unwillingness to fulfill the president's promises of cooperation with our investigation have fueled skepticism about how dedicated they are to holding the responsible parties accountable.

IRS discrimination against the conservative and Tea Party movements has not been limited to the tax-exempt division of the IRS. The inspector general of the IRS informed Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) back on July 3 that there were eight instances of the IRS inappropriately accessing taxpayer records of individuals who were candidates for federal office, three instances of which the inspector general found troubling. In one case, the inspector general of the IRS told Grassley, "We presented evidence of a willful unauthorized access to the Department of Justice, but the case was declined for prosecution." It's likely one of those three cases involved Tea Party Republican Christine O'Donnell, a 2010 candidate for U.S. Senate from Delaware. O'Donnell's tax records were breached and publicized during her campaign, the *Delaware News Journal* [reported](#) July 25, by Delaware state tax auditor David Smith on the same Saturday in which she declared her candidacy.

Photo of IRS field office in New York City



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