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NATURAL RESOURCES

REPUBLICAN STUDY COMMITTEE

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2016

The Honorable John Koskinen
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service

The Honorable Jeff Tribiano
Deputy Commissioner for Operations Support
Internal Revenue Service

Dear Commissioner Koskinen and Deputy Commissioner Tribiano:

As you are likely aware, until very recently the Internal Revenue Service operated two Tax Assistance Centers in my district. These Tax Assistance Centers—like all Tax Assistance Centers—provide valuable services to the hard working, taxpaying citizens of East Texas. I am therefore concerned to hear that the Internal Revenue Service recently closed the Longview Tax Assistance Center office and, from what limited information I could gain from your office and other publically available sources, has no immediate plans for its re-opening.

Instead of having two Tax Assistance Centers covering a very broad area, the men and women of East Texas are instead forced to rely solely on the Tyler Tax Assistance Center. While I do not doubt that the Internal Revenue Service employees in Tyler are hardworking and dedicated individuals, the closure of the Longview Tax Assistance Center is compounded by the fact that the Tyler location is only open for very limited hours, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. In addition, if some reports are to be believed, these limited hours mean that only roughly twenty four individuals *per day* are able to be assisted. This limited service is already having a profound effect on my district, and many families—particularly those with college students—are already suffering.

Though the excuse has been given that Congress cut your budget, that excuse simply does not overcome the facts. While the IRS budget was cut 17% over five years, the House of Representatives cut its own budget by about 22% over a three year period. However, unlike the IRS, Congress did belt tightening so that constituent services were not affected. The IRS on the other hand, made cuts in places specifically designed to make taxpayers suffer instead of making appropriate cuts to the self-coronation that has often accompanied the higher ranking officials within the IRS. Instead of punishing innocent and hardworking American taxpayers, the Internal Revenue Service should instead take appropriate and immediate steps to end the massive and arrogant waste, fraud, and abuse within the agency.

Compounding the egregious nature of your actions is the fact that for this current fiscal year, your appropriation was *increased by Congress* by almost \$290 million dollars. During the small cuts to you agency, there was no need to cut this service to taxpayers. Yet, the year you

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Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

received additional appropriations, you chose to reward the highest ranking in the IRS, and punish taxpayers. This money was appropriated to improve taxpayer services to hire more employees, strengthen cybersecurity, and expand the agency's ability to address identity theft. Yet a mere two months after we gave your agency this huge increase in funding, you respond by rewarding your highest managers, shutting down many offices across the country, and then complaining about a lack of resources.

Appropriations do not seem to make their way to the rank and file IRS employees who are required to work harder with a higher code of ethics being applied in reality. Appropriations are not making their way to help taxpayers as your unwise cuts to taxpayer assistance have shown. Another superb example of your improper priorities is the more than \$6 million dollars in executive bonuses and special compensation that your agency has awarded in the past five years. Instead of paying bonuses to un-elected and un-accountable federal bureaucrats, these funds could certainly have been used to keep open the Longview Tax Assistance Center and others similarly situated.

Given that Congress has already appropriated taxpayer money to improve your agency's taxpayer services—and that your agency continues to have rampant waste, fraud, and abuse—please provide the answers to the following questions to my office by no later than October 26, 2016:

- a. What portion of the \$290 million dollar budgetary increase that the IRS was appropriated for fiscal year 2016 was used to increase taxpayer services? In particular, please provide exact data on what portion of this amount was used to provide additional staff and resources at Taxpayer Assistance Centers.
- b. If no amount of this \$290 million dollar increase was used to provide additional staff and resources at Taxpayer Assistance Centers, please provide a detailed response explaining why your agency chose to allocate resources to other taxpayer services, and please detail exactly what additional taxpayer services were provided with this increased appropriation.
- c. Are there any plans to re-open the Taxpayer Assistance Center in Longview? Are plans to re-open the Longview Taxpayer Assistance Center contingent on additional appropriations from Congress? If your agency's plans are contingent on additional appropriations, please provide an exact and detailed amount as to how much additional taxpayer money is required to re-open the center, and please provide a detailed explanation as to how your agency cannot secure the required amount through efficiencies and elimination of the waste, fraud, and abuse identified in this letter's second paragraph.
- d. If there are no plans to re-open the Longview Tax Assistance Center—contingent on additional appropriations or otherwise—please provide a detailed written explanation as to what steps your agency will take to improve the hours and customer service at the Tyler Tax Assistance Center. Specifically, please focus on what steps your agency will take to ensure that more than *twenty four* hard working taxpayers are assisted on a daily basis.

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

- e. Are there any plans to take remedial steps to assist the taxpayers who have already been affected by the closing of the Longview Taxpayer Assistance Center? If there are no plans to take remedial steps, please detail what your agency will do to address the inequities these taxpayers have suffered.

Your prompt attention to this matter will be appreciated.

Sincerely,



Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress