

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the devastating impact of hunger in America. The debate surrounding cuts to nutrition assistance coupled with nationwide food insecurity is a recipe for disaster for our neediest citizens.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a vital tool that help feed Americans struggling economically. More than 90 percent of SNAP beneficiaries are children, elderly, veterans, or disabled. Four to six million low-income people will be affected by cuts to SNAP funding, including the 450,000 residents in Dallas County, that are food insecure, 300,000 of which are children.

The GOP's efforts to cut \$40 billion in SNAP are unconscionable and we must stand strong for the 16.4 percent of our population that remains food insecure. According to the USDA, one in every five Texas households experiences food insecurity. Out of the estimated 1.8 million Texas children, one in four live in food insecure households. Approximately 3.6 million Texas residents receive some type of federal food assistance.

In my district, I chair the Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions which is composed of organizations dedicated to fighting hunger and making Dallas County food secure. I strongly support the federal programs that work to support the needs of our citizens nationwide. I urge my colleagues to oppose any proposed cuts to nutrition assistance. Collectively, we can do so much to confront food insecurity in our nation.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, on November 1st, thousands of families in my congressional district saw a cut to their SNAP (food stamps) benefits. A family of four saw a loss of up to \$36 a month. Over the course of the next 12 months, many families across my district will lose more than 24 million meals. Michigan families are already struggling to put food on the table, and the last thing we should do is take food away from those who need it most. Unfortunately, this has already happened.

There's no sugarcoating it: we have a hunger problem in Michigan and across the United States. The majority of households receiving SNAP are those with children. It is our responsibility to protect—not cut—critical programs like SNAP for the families and kids who rely on them. That's why I introduced H.R. 3353, the "Extend Not Cut SNAP Benefits Act" which would extend the Recovery Act's 13.6% increase in SNAP for an additional year.

This extraordinarily low level of SNAP benefits under the new levels will force families to find ways to stretch their already limited benefits even further at the grocery store in order to put healthy, nutritious food on the table for their kids. With less money to spend on groceries each month, the importance of nutrition education becomes even more real.

Yet the House and Senate proposed deep cuts within the Farm Bill could cut SNAP by as much as an additional \$40 billion (on top of the cut we just saw on November 1st) and would cut funding for SNAP Education (SNAP-Ed). Keeping SNAP and SNAP-Ed strong isn't just the right thing to do—it's also the smart thing to do. Children who get enough of the healthy food they need, as a rule, face fewer health problems, do better in school and grow up to lead stronger, more productive lives.

THE ABUSE OF POWER BY THE IRS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FLORES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, thank you for the recognition. This evening, I would like to lead the discussion about the blatant abuse of power by the Internal Revenue Service, specifically regarding its targeting of Americans because of their political beliefs.

In early 2012, the Waco Tea Party contacted me to express concern about overly onerous information requests regarding their request to become a 501(c)(4) organization. I subsequently contacted the IRS to get answers, and I also contacted the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee to inform them of the situation that I had been made aware of. Unfortunately, following my inquiry into the IRS, the issue did not go away and, in fact, it got worse. I began to learn that this targeting was wide and spread throughout the country.

In April of 2012, I, along with 62 of my House colleagues, sent a letter to then-IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman requesting a response as to why the IRS was targeting and intimidating conservative groups. We received a basic, nonresponsive letter from the IRS that outlined how applications are processed and that in no way answered our questions on the targeting and the onerous questioning of the grassroots groups.

On May 10, 2013, just a little over a year later, the IRS officially apologized for inappropriately targeting conservative groups like the Waco Tea Party. The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee started and continued to conduct hearings into this targeting of conservative groups.

News reports would go on to reveal that senior IRS personnel knew about this practice as far back as 2011, directly contradicting earlier testimony of senior IRS personnel, who claimed that they did not know of these practices. I, along with my colleagues here on the House floor tonight, are far from satisfied with just an apology.

We have several letters from groups that we are going to share with you tonight. This needless and abusive targeting has burdened many conservative groups throughout the country. I have invited several of my colleagues to come to the House floor and to join me as we bring back to the forefront this blatant abuse of power from the IRS on conservative groups. Tonight, I would like to present the injustice that has been done by reading letters to Congress from these targeted groups that go into detail about their experiences.

The first letter is from a group in my district, Texas District 17. It is the

Waco Tea Party. Here is what their letter says:

We are writing to you to explain to you and to your colleagues what it is like to be targeted by the government via the Internal Revenue Service. We are not writing to explain the facts and details—that is all a matter for public record and the courts—but rather to explain what happens to United States citizens who simply exercise their rights under the law.

When we began the Waco Tea Party, we were regular Americans who spoke out about being taxed enough already. We weren't political operatives or politicians. For the most part, we were new to the world of politics. We were naive. We believed our government had problems, but we didn't realize that it would target citizens for their political beliefs, that it would put us on a "be on the lookout," or BOLO, list, for short, for using the words "Tea Party" in our name; that some Members of Congress would write to the IRS and demand action against us because we held a different position on policy.

We weren't targeted because we broke the law; we were targeted because we were compliant with the law. We weren't targeted because we spoke out; we were targeted because our viewpoints weren't acceptable to government bureaucrats at the IRS. The law was wrongly used against us in an attempt to shut us out and to shut us up.

The toll this IRS targeting is taking on our lives is immeasurable. The financial burden on our small grassroots group has been staggering, requiring many of us to dip into our household budgets to cover expenses, the sleepless nights worrying about what would happen if we couldn't find someone to help us, the emotional stress of explaining to your spouse, your children, family, and friends why you have to miss a special event or special day because we had to work on inane and intrusive demands by the IRS, questions that had nothing to do with our application but were instead used as a weapon of intimidation.

The countless nights that we have laid in our bed not able to sleep, the times that we quietly cried into a pillow because we don't want our spouse to know how scared we are, or the isolation we have felt because of how the media and even some Members of Congress have demonized us, none of this matters to an agent of the government. We are not seen as people. We deeply love our country. We are patriotic, and we are dedicated to preserving our birthrights guaranteed by the Constitution and passing them on to the next generation.

Our grandfathers, fathers, and others fought wars against countries that use government to squelch freedom and liberty of their citizens, only to find that out our own government was now engaging in these tactics. We are not ashamed of our country, but we are disgusted with our government and those who condone the IRS tactics.

We implore you to act to preserve political speech, free speech, to hold people accountable for what they have done to the American citizens. We pray that you and your colleagues will act to restrain government, punish those who were responsible, and restore our First Amendment rights to what the Founders intended.

Sincerely, Toby Marie Walker, Carol Waddell, Becky Kodrin, and Bobby Keith, Waco Tea Party members, supporters and volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, as I told you, there are several letters we have to share tonight. The next person I would like to invite to speak is RANDY WEBER from Texas District 14, and he will share

what some of his constituents have written to him.

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Texas.

As we all know, in May of 2013, it was unearthed—that is probably a pretty good word, because they had it deeply buried in the government bureaucracy—that the IRS was unjustly targeting conservative 501(c)(4) groups and using aggressive intimidation tactics. Today, I rise with my colleagues to share the story of organizations that were unlawfully targeted by the IRS or Internal Revenue Service, as I like to refer to them.

In southeast Texas, in my district, Texas District 14—they are on the gulf coast—the Clear Lake Tea Party was just such a group, one of many that fell victim to the IRS' illegal—and I want to underscore that—illegal maneuvers.

On November 23, 2009, the Clear Lake Tea Party filed their 501(c)(4) tax exempt status. After having received no word from the IRS for almost 8 months, the founder of the Clear Lake Tea Party made an inquiry regarding the status of their application. What they got back from the IRS should shock and appall every American. Here is what Mary Huls, president of the Clear Lake Tea Party, sent our office, what they got back on July 12, 2010:

The Clear Lake Tea Party received an additional information request from Elizabeth Hofacre in the Cincinnati, Ohio, office of the IRS demanding 19 more nontax-related items to complete our application.

The Clear Lake Tea Party board was duly alarmed by the broad and personal nature of the information required, which we would have to deliver and declare under penalties of perjury. We judged the questions to be far outside the normal purview of a nominal request for a tax exempt designation.

For example, number one: they were requested to provide a list of speakers and their qualifications for events that the Clear Lake Tea Party have had in the prior year. They were asked to provide copies of information that was easily found on Facebook and Twitter.

□ 2030

And then, believe it or not, the Clear Lake Tea Party there in Galveston, Texas, Clear Lake, League City, Galveston County area, was asked to explain their relationship with the King Street Patriots, another Tea Party.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was born at night, but it wasn't last night. What in the world does that have to do with their application for their own tax exempt (c)(4) status?

Number 4, they were asked to—and let me just hasten to add, they were not asked to explain their relationship with ACORN or moveon.org or Organizing For America.

Number 4, they were asked to explain the Operation Pink Slip Program and to provide literature concerning this program. How did you decide who would be fired?

Of course, the Clear Lake Tea Party, their immediate reaction upon receiving this information was confusion. You see, they had already been investigated by an IRS agent.

Well, after the IRS' beyond intrusive and illegal, I might add, investigation of the Clear Lake Tea Party, the Clear Lake Tea Party's board met and made the executive decision to withdraw their 501(c)(4) application and to file with the State of Texas as a Texas nonprofit corporation that pays taxes in order to practice and protect their First Amendment freedom of speech.

We got a subsequent email from Ms. Huls, president of the Clear Lake Tea Party, and she stated in that email that they would not be intimidated by this Federal agency or any other, and they would go down a different path. And so they chose to file as a Texas nonprofit.

Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute shame, and I will say a travesty, that the head of the IRS, the former head, could come up to testify in front of our committees, stick her finger in the face of the American taxpayer, in the eye, I would say, and say, I am going to claim the Fifth Amendment. I don't have to answer your questions. I don't have to be accountable to you. I don't have to be accountable to the American taxpayer.

And what I said to my district was, try that one on for size when the IRS wants to audit you. Get in front of their agents, their Gestapo, their henchmen and say, I plead the Fifth Amendment. I don't have to answer your questions, and see how that works.

It is unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, that in the United States of America, we are scrutinized for the applications we file and words are chosen like conservatives, King Street Patriots, and we are so deeply scrutinized as to drive the Clear Lake Tea Party to withdraw their (c)(4) tax exempt status.

Not in America should this ever happen. I am urging my colleagues in the House to join me and my fellow patriots all across this land to continue that cry that the justified scrutiny of the IRS to make sure two things, that those who did this are held accountable, and that it never, ever can happen again in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Mr. Speaker, I am RANDY WEBER, and I love my country. It is the government I fear.

Mr. FLORES. I thank my friend from Texas (Mr. WEBER). And I am now honored to yield to another friend from the great State of Tennessee, MARSHA BLACKBURN, who represents the Tennessee Seventh.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding, and Mr. FLORES has really done a wonderful job of outlining the problem that we have come to the floor to address tonight.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is a problem and a situation that so many of our constituents never thought that they would witness or experience in this great Nation. They always felt that they had the right to free speech because it is a guaranteed right.

How dare that they, or their groups, find themselves subjected to mistreatment by a Federal Government agency because of what they chose to say or to do, all in defense of liberty and the Constitution of this great land.

Well, we had some of our Tennessee groups that were unjustly targeted through this process. They brought that to our attention because they realized that they were the brunt of this mistreatment, that they were facing a Federal Government agency who came bearing the power of the Federal Government to try to fear and intimidate citizens.

Yes, indeed, it is the example of the government turning against the citizens and the power of the government being used to silence the citizens.

So many of our constituents that were involved with this process said, What happened? How did this change? What has caused this to take place?

And what they began to say to us was, if they can do this to others, what are they going to do to us?

If they can do this to us in our group, what will they end up doing to others?

So we have worked very closely and continue to follow what is happening with these groups and, of course, have been very concerned, as we have heard and watched the hearings for how the IRS carried out this data-mining and these word searches.

I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt at all, no doubt in my mind at all why the American people are so concerned about the security of the President's health care law. They know that their data may be used against them because they have living proof with the IRS, that they took information, applications, donors to groups, and then they turned that information against those donors from those groups in order to silence them and to impair their free speech.

I want to read a letter tonight from one of the groups in my district, in our State, that has been unfairly and unjustly treated by the IRS. And this one comes from Linchpins of Liberty. It is stating their posture as of October 21 of this year.

And the gentleman who is the executive director of Linchpins of Liberty is a gentleman named Kevin Kookogey, who started his organization because he loves his country. He loves freedom. He wants to preserve this for his children and future generations.

So he did what a lot of Americans do, decided to put together an organizational structure that individuals could come together under to further the cause of freedom, something more individuals could and should do.

But this is what happened to him, and I am quoting from his letter, which I will enter, Mr. Speaker, as a part of the permanent record for the proceedings of this evening:

Dear Congresswoman Blackburn,

As you know, I am president and founder of Linchpins of Liberty, an American Leadership Development Enterprise.

On January 2, 2011, we filed our application with the IRS seeking to obtain a 501(c)(3) status as an educational organization.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that date is important. January 2, 2011:

For over 33 months now, the IRS has unlawfully delayed and obstructed that application. Under threat of perjury, the IRS has demanded that I disclose the identities of my students, some of whom are minors. One letter from the IRS contained in excess of 90 inquiries of intimidation intended to force me to disclose my donors and to identify the political affiliation of my mentors.

This has come at great cost to me. I have already lost a \$30,000 grant from a reputable nonprofit whose executive director advised me that he had never seen such treatment of a 501(c)(3) applicant in his 25 years of making grants.

On June 5, 2013, the day after I testified before Congress, I then lost most of my business when my largest client advised me that it was uncomfortable with the public expression of my political views in defending my constitutional rights.

A few days later, Congressman McDermott suggested on national television that I may have lied before Congress simply because I was not under oath when I testified. Perhaps he was projecting, because I don't make a distinction between whether or not I am under oath. I tell the truth all the time.

If the intent of the administration is to intimidate and silence the voices of freedom, then it has grossly misjudged its citizens. The government is not our master. It is our agent. We are the principals, and we delegate our rights. We do not surrender them.

I therefore respectfully appeal to you to confront this abuse of power by the executive branch, and, in so doing, to protect, defend and preserve human liberty for ourselves and our posterity.

Sincerely, Kevin Kookogey, president and founder, Linchpins of Liberty.

Mr. Speaker, when you read the letters such as the one from Mr. Kookogey, such as the ones that you are going to hear from other organizations tonight, what you realize is there is an outstanding field of questions relative to what has transpired with the IRS:

Why did they go about this?

What was their purpose?

Was it maliciousness?

Were their actions purposeful?

Was it intended to silence, to silence those that stand in opposition to the practices and the positions of this administration?

Those are some of the questions that our constituents are still seeking to find the answers to. They would like to have their IRS designation because they recognize we are a Nation of laws. We abide by the law, and they would seek to operate within the law.

OCTOBER 21, 2013.

Re Linchpins of Liberty—The Cost of Speaking for Freedom

Hon. MARSHA BLACKBURN,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSWOMAN BLACKBURN: As you know, I am President and Founder of Linchpins of Liberty: An American Leadership Development Enterprise.

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I therefore respectfully appeal to you to confront this abuse of power by the Executive Branch, and in so doing to protect, defend, and preserve human liberty, for ourselves and our posterity.

Sincerely,

KEVIN KOOKOGEY,

President & Founder, Linchpins of Liberty.

Mr. FLORES. I thank the Congresswoman from Tennessee.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words that were shared with us from the gentle lady from Tennessee, from one of her constituents. And we hear firsthand the agonizing feelings of her constituents as they have experienced the abuse of an overreach of Federal power by this feared agency, the IRS.

I am now pleased to yield to another one of my good friends. Representative LANKFORD from Oklahoma will share what some of the folks in Oklahoma Five think about what the IRS has done.

□ 2045

Mr. LANKFORD. Thank you to my colleague for hosting this.

Mr. Speaker, about 3½ years ago, Americans started getting more and more frustrated. It is really a product of several years of building, this sense of helplessness as they struggled and watched their Nation—I don't even know how to begin to describe the emotions that really welled up about 4 years ago when Americans watched their health care beginning to slip away. This absolute divide that happened as a Nation between Republicans and Democrats—and they used to try to work together to try to resolve things—went out the window on a pure partisan vote to push through a health care change that not a single Republican voted for. And Democrats, in a skittish way, pushed it with glee while others stepped back and said, I hope this works the way it is being advertised.

As we know now, it is not working. It is working exactly as many Republicans said it would work. And the im-

pulse of the Federal Government to take over more and more would actually cause serious problems in the process.

At the same time, the United States Government began to overspend more than it ever had in the history of the United States. Mr. Speaker, \$1.45 trillion of overspending in a single year led millions of Americans to stop and to gather—many of them for the first time—gather in small groups and say, Our government is really struggling. This is not going, as a Nation, how we thought it would go. And they gathered together in small groups, which were spontaneously called these Tea Party groups, groups of patriots and individuals, housewives, moms, business leaders, and guys that owned locksmith shops, and all of these different places that were around just started gathering together to say, What can we do? Just normal Americans.

As they began to form and to meet in groups of five, 10, 20, 25—sometimes they would meet with huge rallies of 100 or 200 people. But most of the time, it is at somebody's house. Most of the time it is at a VFW meeting place or some other spot. They determined, Well, we need to get organized, and we need to be able to pass out materials and do some things. And to do that in our governmental system, they have got to try to find some way to be able to organize that money together, which means they need to contact the Internal Revenue Service and be able to access and get a revenue number. Well, they started that.

One of those groups was in Oklahoma, a group called Oklahoma City Patriots in Action. This group of individuals are just normal Oklahoma great folks. They got together, submitted their application, and went through the process they needed to do. And then they get a letter back with 21 questions, some of them having up to nine subquestions to it. Sixty-five total requests came back to this group of individuals saying, We will give you your number if you will tell us all of this information. And to accentuate it, the letter begins with first them needing to sign this statement:

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have examined this information, including accompanying documents, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information contains all the relevant facts relating to the request for the information, and such facts are true, correct, and complete.

And then they go on to make 65 different data requests, many of them incredibly long.

There is no question this letter is intended to intimidate people; but I can tell you from knowing these Oklahomans, they tried to intimidate the wrong people with this.

So let me just give you an example of some of the things they began to ask for in this long list of questions. They asked things like:

Do you directly or indirectly communicate with members of legislative bodies? If so,

provide copies of the written communications and contents of other forms of communications.

In other words, if you redress grievances to your elected officials, as our Constitution allows you to do, please provide us a copy of everything you said when you went to your government for a redress of grievances.

How about this:

Give detailed examples on how you will educate the public concerning key legislation and the positions of political candidates and elected officials on that legislation.

Please explain how you obtain the current legislative information, both State and Federal, and the turnaround time to post on your Web site.

Why in the world does it matter what their turnaround time is—whether they post it in a day or 10 days—for your IRS application?

How about this:

Please provide copies of your current Web pages from your Web site.

Wouldn't it be easier just to ask for the Web site name and then go search it themselves? They wouldn't have to print out copies of every page.

And here are two sets of my favorites, of this long list. I could go on and on with it. This asks:

Have you conducted or will you conduct rallies or exhibitions for or against any public policies, legislation, public officers, political candidates, or like kinds? If yes, please explain and provide the following: State the time, location, and content schedule of each rally or exhibition. Provide copies of handouts you provided or will provide to the public. The names of persons from your organization and the amount of time they have spent or will spend on the event.

One last piece—and again, I could go on and on with this. This is the one that, when I read through this, it continued just to make my blood boil:

Have any candidates running for public office spoken or will they speak at a function of your organization? If so, provide the names of the candidates, the functions at which they spoke, any materials distributed or published with regard to their appearance and the event, any video or audio recordings of the event, and a transcript of any speeches given by the candidates.

Now, these are a gathering of 20 people sitting around in someone's house. They are not transcribing every part of everything that is said. These are normal Americans getting together to discuss what is going on in their government. And the IRS said, If you want to continue to do this and be organized, we need to get a transcript of every speech that was done around your kitchen table.

And to add insult to injury, remember what I said at the beginning, Under penalties of perjury, if you don't provide completely everything in this, you are not eligible.

What is this intended to do? This is intended to silence. This is intended to tell good, hardworking Americans, Be quiet, sit around your dining room table, don't organize, don't keep moving.

Now when our committee asked about this, the Oversight and Govern-

ment Reform Committee, which I serve on, when we asked about this initially and began pushing forward to get more information—because as the folks in Oklahoma City know, this is not an isolated event. Letters like this, with other questions, went to other places all over the country, to everyone who had the name “Tea Party,” had the word “liberty,” or had the word “patriot” in their name. They were assigned to a specific group in Cincinnati, and they dead-ended all in that one group.

Now, initially, when we asked individuals about it, we were told this was just a crazy group of folks in Cincinnati that went rogue, as if they all worked for WKRP, and they were out there just being crazy in Cincinnati.

When we asked those quote-unquote “rogue” agents in Cincinnati to come before our committee and to tell us about it, what we were told was very clear. They were following the instructions they got from Washington, D.C., on what to do with these applications. And a special group was set up that all they did was take in applications that had “Tea Party,” “liberty,” or “patriot” in it. And when they arrived at that location, they were to sit there and wait for instructions from Washington, D.C.

So we asked the Cincinnati folks, Who gave you those instructions in Washington, D.C.? Those individuals were then called before our committee. And we asked those individuals, Did you give instructions to the Cincinnati office? Yes. Why did you do that? Here was their statement:

Because we were told by the IRS counsel to wait on their instructions.

We are now in the process of doing interviews with the IRS counsel to say, Why was the decision made to say, people with certain names, send them letters like this with no intention of ever answering them? That they would get 65 detailed requests like this, each providing a very long response needed? And that then when it was finally collected, they would dead-end in Cincinnati. Why? We are still trying to get that answer.

Why does that matter? Because Americans, whether they be liberal, conservative, anything in between should have a government that serves them, rather than intimidates them. It is right that we continue to walk through this process. It is right that good, hardworking Americans are not intimidated by their government.

This is something that needs to be resolved and will be resolved, and though the headlines have faded away on it, we have not forgotten these individuals. And we will continue to work through the process to be held to account and to make sure this doesn't happen to anyone again in the days ahead.

I thank the gentleman for hosting this time so that these folks in Oklahoma City and around the country are not forgotten.

Mr. FLORES. I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) for sharing with us more chilling evidence of a Federal Government that has gone wild and how the Federal Government can target you based on what is in your name.

I would now like to yield to my good friend from Texas, Mr. LOUIE GOHMERT, from Texas' District One.

Mr. GOHMERT. I thank my dear fellow alumnus of Texas A&M. We do go way back, knowing each other from undergraduate days.

I want to follow up, and I am very grateful for my friend from Texas (Mr. FLORES) taking charge of this hour, setting it up to talk about the IRS and the abuses.

And I know we have been talking about the abuses of Tea Party conservative groups, pro-Israel groups; but I wanted to just touch in brief on the extent of the arrogance of the IRS. They feel like they are above the law. Lois Lerner never showed any remorse for what certainly appears not only to have been perjury but also to have been a crime. There is a specific criminal code provision dealing with abuses of the Internal Revenue office.

And you have Kathleen Sebelius. And right now, of course, people all over the country, millions are losing or have lost their health insurance. And there was this article here in October. This was from CNN News:

In an interview with CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta Tuesday night, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said she won't be enrolling in the problem-plagued health insurance system that she was charged to implement. “I have created an account on the site. I have not tried signing up, because I have insurance.”

Well, she—like the IRS—has Federal employee insurance, and they don't care about everybody else, but we know the head of Health and Human Services says she is not going to bother with it.

And as we look into the arrogance of the Internal Revenue Service—and I especially appreciate my friend from Texas, BILL FLORES, bringing this up because I don't know how many CPAs we have in Congress—but I know the CPA exam was a lot tougher than the bar exam. And I certainly appreciate somebody that knows about dealing with the IRS.

But this article, “IRS Employees' Union Urges Members to Oppose Obamacare—For Themselves.” And the article goes on. So NTEU, which is the union for Treasury employees, is strongly urging its members, including the IRS agents tasked with implementing ObamaCare, to oppose DAVE CAMP's legislation which would compel them to personally participate in the same health care program they will be enforcing. On the NTEU Web site, union members are urged to email their Congressmen and Senators and ask them to oppose H.R. 1780. It provides a sample letter that they should provide, saying:

I am a Federal employee and one of your constituents. I am very concerned about legislation that has been introduced by Congressman Dave Camp to push Federal employees out of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program and into the insurance exchanges established under the Affordable Care Act.

It is just the height of arrogance that the IRS, while they are investigating groups that believe in the propriety and fidelity of the United States Constitution—because somehow they are a threat to the United States Constitution because they believe in it—at the same time, they know they are gearing up to enforce ObamaCare and to delve into the most private information that people have. It is not enough to just look at financial information. They are going to be looking to see about their health care and their health care coverage and can get even more detail than what we have been hearing during this hour.

I can't imagine a worse prescription for abandoning the Constitution than that. And not only that, we have heard that ObamaCare—correctly, apparently—that it will cause the hiring of 17,000, 18,000 new IRS agents. And although I was not a math major, I love math and did very well every time I took it, but if you multiply 56,000 times 18,000 IRS employees, in 1 year you have added over \$1 billion to health care costs. And there is not one of those 18,000 IRS agents, as arrogant as they may be and as personal as they are going to get, that are going to do anything but create a need for health care and not provide any whatsoever.

□ 2100

They may cause some ulcers. They are certainly not going to solve or be a solution for someone's ulcers. We still don't have proper accountability for the IRS.

One other thing about the IRS and their handling of this. We keep being told that there are 5 million people that have lost their policies. As I understand it, it is 5 million policies. We are talking about a lot more than 5 million people. And when you think about the people that are going to have to pay for their health care and the extra billion dollars for new IRS agents and the billions of dollars over time that will be paid for the navigators and all those people that won't provide any health care whatsoever, it is staggering.

People across America, from the polls, are figuring out this isn't about their health care. This is about the GRE—the government running everything.

And some people I know wonder, well, what solution is there? Even if you had a fair tax or a flat tax, you still have got to have an IRS.

And I love Arthur Laffer, Reagan's economic adviser. He said, Louie, you don't have to have the IRS. You ought to do away with it.

The problem with the IRS is that, of course, they are going to get arrogant

because they pick who they are going to audit, just like we have seen with all these abuses. They pick what all they are going to audit, just as we have been hearing. They get so intrusive, so personal, and then they decide what your punishment is going to be.

There is no other area like it in America, and I don't think the Founders anticipated that the IRS or any entity would ever exist that could be the prosecutor, the judge, the jury, and the executioner all. And that is why Arthur Laffer says you need to get rid of the IRS and have an auditing agency that is a fraction of the size of the IRS.

They don't get to pick whom they audit. That is done completely at random. They never get to pick whom they audit. And they never get to decide what will be done with their auditing. It has to be passed on to Justice or to the collection of the taxes if they have not been paid. They never get to participate in that. And I like the way that sounds, especially the more we hear about the abuses of people that are just freedom-loving Americans.

So I appreciate very much my friend taking this time so we can talk about the IRS. And I realize that he knew when he signed up for this hour that there would be others to come. And it is a brave thing because he is risking an audit as we go in because he knows better than anybody just how abusive the IRS can get.

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of Mr. GOHMERT. I think he raises an issue that all Americans rightly need to be concerned about, and that is the invasion of our privacy that we expect to have under our Constitution when you have an IRS that is looking into your personal records.

Mr. Speaker, I did get a letter from the IRS about 6 weeks after I wrote my letter to them demanding an answer for what they were doing to the Waco Tea Party. So I think they are targeting everybody. They don't care who they target. It seems like they are on a mission to try to squelch opposition to this administration's policies.

I would now like to yield to a brand-new freshman Member from Florida. Mr. DESANTIS from Florida's Sixth District is going to share some stories about what his constituents have experienced with the IRS.

Mr. DESANTIS. I thank the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. Speaker, the power to tax is the power to destroy, and so when you have the government using that taxing power to target individual Americans based on their exercise of First Amendment rights, that really is the utmost seriousness in terms of the threat that that represents to constitutional government.

I received a letter from one of my constituents a couple of weeks back named Carole McManus, and she is a leader in a conservative group in northeast Florida. They are basically dedicated towards educating about con-

stitutional government, individual freedom, the rule of law, and traditional American principles. I would think that that would be something that we would be applauding, especially in this day and age.

Well, they had to go through this situation with the IRS. So they submitted an application and they waited for a month, 3 months, 6 months, a year. It took 18 months for the IRS to respond to their inquiry; and when the IRS responded, did they approve the group, as would be a matter of course, particularly for groups that were recognized as representing a liberal perspective? No. They were given a list of very intrusive questions about the operation of their group.

I actually saw this firsthand during the 2012 election, because I went just to shake hands with folks one night just to see how people were doing, and all the group leaders were scared that I was there because they didn't want to get hit by the IRS. They didn't want to do anything wrong.

And so what the IRS was able to do by stretching this out, by submitting all these intrusive questions, they really chilled these folks from feeling confident in being able to exercise their First Amendment rights. And they did look scared about what could happen to them just because I happened to show up even though it was not a partisan event. I was shaking hands and we were talking about this stuff.

So I appreciate the gentleman from Texas organizing this hour.

The frustrating thing about it is, yes, you may have impropriety in any given administration, but what we have now with the IRS is we have a lot of career bureaucrats who have their own ideological bent. We have people like Lois Lerner, who take it upon themselves to target groups that they think deserve targeting. And the problem with that is nobody ever elected Lois Lerner to anything. Essentially, she is a nameless, faceless bureaucrat that you have just got to hope the point of view that you are trying to pursue is not one that she finds objectionable.

That lack of accountability, not knowing whether the bureaucracy will come down on you, that is a problem with the IRS. That is a problem in any of these agencies, quite frankly.

So I think the more that Americans understand the threat that is posed by a runaway bureaucracy, I think the better. I would like to see some far-reaching reforms so that we are protecting taxpayers and we are protecting American citizens in the exercise of their right.

And you know what? If the bureaucracy steps out of bounds, there ought to be consequences for that. The idea that somehow Lois Lerner is going to retire with full pay and benefits and not be held responsible at all, even though she couldn't even testify in front of the Oversight Committee, I think that rubs a lot of Americans wrong.

So I thank the gentleman from Texas for organizing this. I really appreciate the attention that you have focused on this issue.

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for that heartfelt testimony today. I would also like to thank him for his years of service in the United States Navy and as a current member of the United States Naval Reserve. We appreciate having people like this that serve our country.

It is a shame that Americans who serve their country, whether they are in Congress or just a member of a local Tea Party, are targeted because of the fact that they are concerned about what is happening in Washington, what is happening from an administration or from the nameless, faceless bureaucrats that you heard of a few minutes ago.

Mr. Speaker, may I inquire how much time we have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. FLORES. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have, as I told you at the outset of this conversation, many letters that we received from folks all over this country. And I am not going to read all these letters, but I am going to include some of them in the RECORD of tonight's proceedings.

One letter is from Amen, or Abortion Must End Now, that talks about how they were targeted. The Greenwich Tea Party Patriots of South Jersey wrote in about how they were targeted and the IRS treated them.

You heard Mr. DESANTIS from Florida talk about the First Coast Tea Party and how they were targeted, so their letter is going to be part of the RECORD. The Hawaii Tea Party writes in and talks about their experiences with the IRS. The Kentucky 9/12 Project has written in to talk about what they experienced.

The Manassas Tea Party next door in Virginia has written in to talk about how long it took for them to have their application reviewed and how they were bullied and insulted.

You heard Mr. LANKFORD talk about the OK Tea Party and Patriots in Action Association. The Patriots Educating Concerned Americans Now, or PECAN for short, in California, we got a letter from them. The Roane County Tea Party from Tennessee, we have got a letter from them.

We also have a letter from the San Fernando Valley Patriots in California that talks about the IRS treatment and the abuse. Actually, this one is sort of interesting because it has a poem, so I am going to read this one.

Again, this is from the San Fernando Valley Patriots in California. This letter starts with a poem entitled, "Our Grassroots Voice," by Karen Kenney, coordinator, San Fernando Valley Patriots:

The faces of the San Fernando Valley Patriots are different from our voice.

We are Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, but patriots all.

We speak as one with a love of God and country.

But our voice is a whisper against the roar that is this government.

We began as a "tea party" group in May 2009 near Los Angeles; born from the tax burdens within the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

A government too big, makes each citizen small, we thought. The First Amendment would offer a platform for us to speak politically, but we were wrong. Our government unsheathed its sword: the IRS.

The IRS did what tyranny does: threaten and control. The questionnaires sent to us were consuming; their intent to test our resolve.

But liberty prefers to stand and be heard.

We held more than 85 events in 2 years, but donations dropped and costs rose. We could afford fewer speakers, rallies, and handouts.

In July 2012, we withdrew our application for tax-exempt status with the IRS after 20 months of delays and grueling red tape.

We must now pay nonprofit taxes in California. The minimum is \$800 annually.

We have little money, but more people.

On June 4, 2013, the Ways and Means Committee heard our voice.

Now, our voice is stronger and more heard. God bless America.

And here is their letter:

On June 4, 2013, we told our story to the Ways and Means Committee. We did not plead the Fifth. We did not hide the facts. We did not lie. Our voice rose against the tyranny that is the IRS scandal. We told the truth of how a government too big makes each citizen small. We told the truth of abuse of power by the fist of a grinding bureaucracy.

We spoke of demand-and-delay tactics that cut our funds and public face. The IRS kept pounding, and we stopped our application for tax relief. But we did not stop meeting, teaching, and talking about the Constitution.

Now we have fewer speakers, fewer rallies, and fewer resources. But our resolve is undaunted. You see, we stand firmly with the First Amendment, not the Fifth.

God bless this Nation. God bless its people. God bless our liberty.

Karen Kenney, San Fernando Valley Patriots.

We have a letter from the Shelby County Liberty in Ohio. We have the Unite in Action from Nashville, Tennessee. We have the Wetumpka Tea Party from Alabama, who wrote in about their treatment at the hands of an overreaching IRS.

The Liberty Township Tea Party from Ohio has written in. The Richmond Tea Party, again, from next door in Virginia, has a letter that they want Americans to know about. The Rochester Tea Party Patriots in Minnesota, and the Greater Phoenix Tea Party Patriots in Arizona have written in.

On our Web site at flores.house.gov we have a timetable of when the IRS started this and what processes they went through and the lies that were told to the American people about what they were doing. And then we also had some testimony about when they came clean and when IRS officials started to resign. So it would be fascinating for Americans to be able to see that.

Mr. Speaker, the IRS is supposed to enforce our tax laws with integrity and

fairness. Yet here we are, 6 months later, and the Obama administration has done nothing more than to try and ride out the storm without taking action.

Lois Lerner and Doug Shulman have resigned from the IRS. However, they are still entitled to live the rest of their lives living on the backs of the hardworking American taxpayers that they abused when they were with the IRS.

□ 2115

Mr. Speaker, folks like Lerner and Shulman should never be allowed to get away with behavior like this and to get on Federal retirement. The IRS must stop targeting certain individuals and groups for partisan reasons. It is time that the administration gives Congress the information that we have requested over and over and over again so that the American people will know the facts and so that they will know that these practices are no longer being done. Americans deserve and demand transparency from government agencies, and they deserve compliance with law and with the Constitution.

My colleagues and I remain committed to finding answers and to putting a stop to this injustice. Mr. Speaker, I would like for every Federal bureaucrat who has tried to abuse the American people to have to submit their testimony with this same language that they requested from these everyday Americans who were just trying to stand up and exercise their First Amendment rights. I would like them to say:

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have examined this information, including the accompanying documents, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information that all the relevant facts relating to the request for information and such facts are true, correct and complete.

This is what Lois Lerner should have had to provide, not plead the Fifth. As I said before, my colleagues and I remain committed to finding answers and to putting a stop to this injustice.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing us to bring this issue back to the forefront as we continue to look for answers and demand action. We will reassure the American public that the IRS and other Federal agencies will not scrutinize individuals and groups for political or ideological party reasons.

I also submit for the RECORD the letters that we received tonight.

I would ask that all Americans tonight continue to pray for their country during these difficult times for our military men and women and for our first responders.

I will close by saying, God bless America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

AMEN (Abortion Must End Now)

AMEN (Abortion Must End Now) is a faith-based organization dedicated to defending the sanctity of life from its moment of conception. The Internal Revenue Service targeted AMEN, accusing us of being political.

Months into our 501c3 filing, AMEN received a letter from the IRS, not fully understanding the terminology, I phoned them. The IRS specialist shared with me that we could be seen as being "too political". The specialist continued to explain that the references to religion within our Mission statement could be an issue. The IRS also informed me that our name, AMEN (Abortion Must End Now) could be seen as "political" because it infers, "we aim to abolish abortion." I questioned, "We would have to change our name and Mission?" the IRS Specialist responded, "Most likely." I shared with the specialist that if we changed our name and Mission, we would no longer be the same organization.

It is because of the statements made by the IRS that we ignored future letters to pursue our tax-exempt status. We felt with abortion silencing the voices of over 3,200 American babies each day, we could not allow the IRS to silence ours.

The abuse of the IRS has truly impacted our organization. We operate on a very low budget, as many are unable to donate without having the advantage of a tax credit. We feel that our growth has been stunted due to the unethical actions of the IRS. We also feel that we continue to be a target as after our application for tax exemption in 2009, 2 out of 3 Directors of AMEN have been audited.

AMEN was targeted because we believe in defending the Unalienable Right to Life. The IRS has acted unlawfully and it is this unlawful abuse that must be aborted.

God Bless America,

KRISTY LIEN, *President.*

Greenwich Tea Party Patriots of South Jersey (New Jersey)

In early 2011, our organization, The Greenwich Tea Party Patriots of South Jersey filed an application for an exemption from Federal income tax and are still "in the process."

It is the desire of our organization to simply educate and informs the public concerning policies and issues that are taking place in our society. Membership includes a large number of elderly who do not have computers so newsletters are sent at least monthly via regular mail. Our primary reason for asking for this exemption was simply to get a better rate when mailing newsletters. Although we do take advantage of the "bulk rate" price allowed to us due to the number of pieces we send, the price for an exempted organization is significantly lower.

Most Americans historically are extremely intimidated by the IRS and the scandal that was created by the IRS and has made most citizens even more apprehensive.

Our organization has been irreparably affected by this scandal.

For instance, we have had a booth at our county fair for several years now. In the past, many people wanted to sign up on our mail list to get information. This year, only a few people wanted to put their name on the "sign-up" form with most saying, "I'm not putting my name on that and risk being audited by the IRS."

Many people have also told us that they would love to give us a nice donation but are afraid the "IRS will find out and they will be targeted."

All we wanted was a better rate for mailing our newsletters and we are still awaiting the process.

Sincerely,

BRENDA ROAMES, *President.*

FIRST COAST TEA PARTY (FLORIDA)

I know you are familiar with the First Coast Tea Party that encompasses members

in the NE area of Florida (specifically most members are from Duval, St. Johns and Clay counties). I wanted to bring our group's IRS issue (following our 8/31/10 501c4 application) to your attention.

As our group was going thru a transition with the leadership of our organization, in early 2012, we received a letter from the IRS requesting additional information before the IRS could/would complete their consideration of our application for exemption. Early 2012, was a hectic period for our volunteer tea party group.

Leadership changes and the kick-off of our 2012 focused goals to help with getting out the vote, was now interrupted with the IRS request for responses to 11 comprehensive questions regarding our organization. This request came nearly 18 months after we sent in our application. (Note: The letter from the IRS was dated January 31, 2012 with a request for our response by February 21, 2012.)

At the time of this request from the IRS, I was responsible for answering the questions with the assistance of our CPA and the help of volunteers with the FCTP.

As a young volunteer organization, our files, etc. were not fully established and yet the window to complete the request was upon us. Gathering the data and providing samples (where specifically asked) was time intensive and costly. We met the deadline and sent off 4 pounds of paper to the IRS.

We had not provided the information completely, in the eyes of the IRS, so on July 16th with an added request for information from 2 comprehensive questions, the FCTP responded to the IRS on August 7, 2012. Again, this interruption to our 2012 election year focus was frustrating and seemed like a diversion. We worked with Mr. Grant Herring from a Cincinnati, Ohio office of the IRS.

We received our 501c4 status in November of 2012.

Regards,

CAROLE MC MANUS.

HAWAII TEA PARTY

Hawaii Tea Party also known as TEA Party Maui is a non-partisan educational group which sought recognition and standing with the IRS under provision 501(c)4 for Tax-Exempt, Non-Profit status.

From the very beginning of our 755 day ordeal, which began with our original application in May 2010, and continued until our eventual receipt of official IRS approval in July 2012; we were targeted, thwarted, intimidated, and subjected to unreasonable and over-reaching demands that were far afield of the intent of the screening of such applications. Bear in mind that normally, 501(c)4 applications were routinely granted by the IRS within 90 to 180 days. The IRS delays in returning follow-up telephone calls and emails and their stonewalling of our requests for information only served to exacerbate our in-limbo status; which in effect shrunk attendance at our meetings, lessened participation in our events, and diminished the donations we did receive. But most significantly, the IRS actions created in the general public a fear of association and identification with the TEA Party name; and with our membership, an overwhelming fear of personal identification and harassment by the IRS. All of this conspired to place us in the unenviable position of not being able to fully participate in the democratic process for the important 2010 mid-term election cycle, as well as the 2012 national elections.

As of this writing, October 2013, we have learned that our suspicions during the 755-day ordeal of an IRS campaign targeting suppression of our Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Assembly, and Freedom to Redress

our Grievances have proved to be true. We believe that all Americans should find this illegal activity by the IRS outrageously egregious and demand full accountability by the persons involved and that they be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Sincerely,

TEA PARTY MAUI BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

KENTUCKY 9/12 PROJECT

It is with sadness for our country that I write this to inform you of what we went through and implore you to fix what we have become. Kentucky 9/12 Project filed its application for 501(c)(4) in December, 2010 with great confidence that all of its activities, relations, and dealings fell well within the bounds of that which defines that status. We as citizens were then targeted and held hostage by this administration at the arms of the IRS for over two years. During this time of uncertainty we were directly hindered in our fund raising and abilities to serve the people that shared our principles in the communities and state we live in. This is far greater than a financial impact and to us this was never about a bureaucracy verses some large organization but a government directly attacking and trying to silence ordinary individual people and thought. Personally this fundamentally changed me and it was with great consternation for me and my family that we went forward with a federal lawsuit against the IRS and United States of America. I would hope that those we elected and our representatives on both side of the isle would see the severity of this as a wakeup call to what we have become. As for me, I shall and we should be forever fearful of what government has become and can and may do to any of us.

Respectful Regards,

ERIC WILSON.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mrs. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1471. An act to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of the Army to reconsider decisions to inter or honor the memory of a person in a national cemetery, and for other purposes.

S. 1545. An act to extend authorities related to global HIV/AIDS and to promote oversight of United States programs.

FREEDOM AND TECHNOLOGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHR-ABACHER) for 30 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, there is a piece of legislation that will be going through the Judiciary Committee on Wednesday that the American people need to be alerted about. It goes right to the heart of our prosperity, right to the heart of our national security, right to the heart of the well-being of average Americans.

Our Founding Fathers believed that with technology and freedom—and, yes, with the profit motive—that those things would uplift all of humankind and that this would be the formula that would make America a great Nation. In fact, they wrote into our Constitution a mandate that guarantees