

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6216
(202) 225-3951
judiciary.house.gov

July 27, 2021

The Honorable J. Russell George
Inspector General for Tax Administration
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1401 H Street NW, Suite 469
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. George:

On June 8, 2021, ProPublica began publishing a series of articles after “obtain[ing] a vast trove of Internal Revenue Service data on the tax returns of thousands of the nation’s wealthiest people, covering more than 15 years.”¹ Because tax returns are filled with personal and sensitive information, federal law requires that tax “[r]eturns and return information shall be confidential.”² Congress has also made the unlawful disclosure of tax return information a felony.³ Despite these safeguards, an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) employee or employees—or someone with access to the returns—disclosed this confidential information to ProPublica in violation of the law.

IRS Commissioner Rettig has stated that an investigation by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) is underway.⁴ The Committee is also conducting an investigation of the release of taxpayer information to ProPublica. To assist the Committee in conducting oversight of this incident, we request that you provide a staff-level briefing on TIGTA’s investigation to date. Please provide the requested briefing as soon as possible but not later than 5:00 p.m. on August 10, 2021.

¹ Jessee Eisinger et al., *The Secret IRS Files: Trove of Never-Before-Seen Records Reveal How the Wealthiest Avoid Income Tax*, PROPUBLICA (Jun. 8, 2021).

² 26 U.S.C. § 6103(a).

³ See 26 U.S.C. § 7213(a).

⁴ See, e.g. Zachary Halaschak, ‘Secret’ tax records of wealthiest Americans leaked to media, WASH. EX. (Jun. 8, 2021) (“The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration will lead the investigation.”); see also Press Release, H. Comm. on Ways and Means, Brady Briefed by IRS Commissioner Rettig o Leak of Sensitive Taxpayer Information (Jun. 15, 2021) (“Commissioner Rettig assured [Ranking Member Brady] that an investigation is already underway by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration into the extent, severity, and source of the exposure of Americans’ personal financial information.”).

The Honorable J. Russell George

July 27, 2021

Page 2

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Judiciary Committee staff at (202) 225-6906. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Jordan".

Jim Jordan
Ranking Member

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell Issa".

Darrell Issa
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual
Property, and the Internet

cc: The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler, Chairman

The Honorable Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Chairman
Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet