

House Conservatives Make Hard-Core Call Against IRS Chief

Conservatives' campaign to impeach IRS Commissioner John Koskinen has yielded hearings but little else. As the congressional calendar slips by, some accuse House Republican leaders of dragging their feet on the issue.

"We're running out of time" to impeach Koskinen, Rep. Raúl Labrador, R-Idaho, recently told *The Daily Signal*.

House leadership isn't serious about impeachment and removal of the IRS chief, Labrador said, adding that he believes House Speaker Paul Ryan and his team probably are "trying to delay it on purpose."

Conservatives have been angling for Koskinen's impeachment since last fall. They argue that the nation's top taxman is unfit for office because of his obstruction of a congressional investigation into how the IRS treated conservative groups that applied for nonprofit tax status.

In October, Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, drew up impeachment articles. Seven months later, Ryan allowed the process to move forward but only after the conservative House Freedom Caucus twisted leadership's arm on the issue.

The Judiciary Committee invited four scholars to testify June 22 on the constitutional mechanics of impeachment, while Koskinen declined to testify for a second time.

The hearing didn't shed much light on how the House plans to proceed. The Freedom Caucus, which Labrador helped found, released a statement that afternoon calling for an impeachment

vote on the House floor, something leadership has not done.

"Mr. Koskinen is guilty of gross negligence, dereliction of duty and violating the public trust, and therefore meets the legal standard for impeachment of a public official," the caucus of roughly 40 lawmakers said in the statement.

Chaffetz, who first spearheaded the effort to topple Koskinen, credited leadership for letting the hearing go forward. To keep the impeachment process from stalling, though, the Utah representative led his committee in censuring the tax chief in May.

To the chagrin of Chaffetz, leadership has not scheduled a vote on that measure either.

"Censure and impeachment are directly within [House] control," Chaffetz told *The Daily Signal*. "We have no other scapegoat but ourselves. We can moan and groan and cry or we can actually do something. That's the choice before us."

Reps. Ken Buck, R-Colo., and Mark Sanford, R-S.C., launched a new effort to end Koskinen's tenure by emptying his wallet.

The two introduced an amendment to a financial services spending bill to cut the IRS chief's salary to zero. Because federal law prevents working for free, the duo reasons, the amendment would keep Koskinen from returning to his office.

Whether the measure can gain political traction, or is even constitutional, remains an open question.

Another impeachment avenue exists if all else fails, conservative staffers say. The Freedom Caucus could force an impeachment vote on the floor through a parliamentary procedure known as a "privileged resolution."

Before the July 22 hearing, Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, chairman of the Freedom Caucus, said that he's focusing on taking things "one step at a time." But, he noted, the Freedom Caucus

“will never rule out anything” when it comes to impeaching Koskinen.

Conservatives’ campaign to impeach Koskinen will have to compete with Democrats’ tactics to force a vote on gun control. With their “sit-in” holding up the House floor, Democrats triggered an early recess before the Fourth of July. They’re promising to renew that effort when Congress returns July 5.