

IRS Troubles Multiply as New Scandal Unfolds

If there's one government agency that doesn't need another scandal, it's the Internal Revenue Service.

In the news for wasting millions on videos, staff conferences and targeting conservative groups, the **IRS** now faces a claim that someone in the supposed independent agency committed a felony to silence opposing views on marriage.

No matter where you stand, the future of marriage stirs strong emotions on both sides of the debate, but one thing everyone agrees on: Government agencies that are supposed to be independent, especially those as powerful as the Internal Revenue Service, shouldn't use their leverage to help either side.

But one conservative group charges that's just what happened when the IRS leaked names and addresses of some of its supporters.

"People's names were disclosed as donors," said Dr. John Eastman, chairman of the National Organization for Marriage. "Their businesses were boycotted (and) if there was an employee at a business, that business was boycotted."

Eastman made his charges as various conservative organizations said the IRS targeted them for political harassment, an accusation that's drawn condemnation from the right and the left.

"This is not about ambiguity in the law; this not about any such thing. This is about abuse of power," Rep. Peter Roskam, R-Ill., said.

"I believe that it's outrageous," said Rep. Mike Thompson, D-

Calif. "It's inappropriate. It's wrong, and we must do everything that we can do to fix it."

Meanwhile, Eastman's group believes someone in the IRS illegally gave its private donors' list to the Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights group that supports **same-sex marriage**.

HRC posted the donor information on line during the 2012 election campaign. CBN News contacted the HRC for comment, but it did not respond.

The National Organization for Marriage requested investigations into who leaked the names of the financial supporters of traditional marriage with both the IRS and the **Department of Justice**. But up till now, NOM has been essentially stonewalled.

"Nothing has changed since the hearing except that more and more voices are demanding answers," said Thomas Peters of the National Organization for Marriage (NOM).

According to NOM, after the list of donors was posted on the Internet, many of them were harassed, boycotted and ultimately intimidated from contributing. Now NOM is suing the IRS for civil penalties, and Peters says this case has implications for all Americans.

"It's chilling of our **free speech**," he said. "Americans on both sides of the question about what marriage is have a right to donate, to organize, to use all the tools of the political process to share their views and to put their money where their mouth is."

Meanwhile, lawmakers promise they'll find out who released the private information on the donors.

"I have to tell you, Mr. Eastman, this is egregious, and we're going to get to the bottom of it," said Rep. Charles Boustany R-Louisiana.