Judicial Watch: The IRS Used ‘Guilt by Association’

The government watchdog organization Judicial Watch announced Tuesday afternoon that it has obtained 1,593 pages of new documents from the Internal Revenue Service.

Those documents include noted from 2011 interoffice meeting of top IRS officials at the agency’s Washington, D.C., headquarters in which it was admitted that Cincinnati office agents were targeting organizations requesting tax exempt status based on “guilt by association” and “party affiliation.” The handwritten notes were, according to an IRS court filing, part of information taken from “four Chief Counsel employees (Victoria Judson, Janine Cook, Susan Brown, and Don Spellmann), Tax Exempt and Government Entities Division employee Nalee Park, and former IRS employee Sarah Hall Ingram.”

The notes reveal Paz’s concerns about the Cincinnati office’s targeting of groups based upon ideology and party affiliation:

> *Holly—Cinci paralyzed by letting any issue go unaddressed. They think they know what the org is really doing, rather than looking at actual activities. Q’s were not activity based, but guilt by association questions—like q’s asking party affiliations …*
>
> *They see approval of something that will turn out to be very bad org—terrified of that—that’s why they personally will need to have power to say yes. Agents felt if they could ask enough questions, they will find a problem. Agents were jumping to negative conclusions and assumptions—particularly where relationship with political groups or affiliations.*

The new documents were recently provided to Judicial Watch under a court order in an October 2013 Freedom of Information

Act lawsuit against the IRS. The lawsuit quickly followed a May 2013 Treasury Inspector General report that revealed the IRS singled out groups with conservative-sounding terms such as “patriot” and “Tea Party” in their titles when applying for tax-exempt status. The probe determined that “early in Calendar Year 2010, the IRS began using inappropriate criteria to identify organizations applying for tax-exempt status to (e.g., lists of past and future donors).”

That same report found the illegal IRS reviews continued for more than 18 months and “delayed processing of targeted groups’ applications” preparing for the 2012 presidential election. The new documents predate the IG report by nearly two years.

“This further confirms the IRS knew about abuses years before they were exposed,” Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton said. “President Trump needs to reopen the criminal investigation of the IRS as soon as he is sworn into office.”

Meanwhile, the impeachment of IRS Commissioner John Koskinen remains stalled in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. It appears several Republicans agree that his actions were incompetent, but do not necessarily rise to the level of impeachment.