

Will the IRS Commissioner Be Impeached?

IRS Commissioner John Koskinen's days on the job may be numbered.

The House of Representatives is expected to consider articles of impeachment against the embattled treasury officer soon. The first of three articles charges him with engaging in a pattern of conduct incompatible with his job, the second charges him with lying to Congress, and the third charges him with acting in a manner inconsistent with the trust and confidence placed in him as an officer of the United States.

The House Oversight Committee, which investigated the IRS's abuse of power, compiled a 41-page report on Koskinen's involvement in the scandal. On the final page, it presents the committee's recommendation:

"More than two years have passed since Congress began investigating the IRS's mistreatment of conservative tax-exempt groups. After reviewing more than one million pages of documents, conducting more than 50 transcribed interviews, and holding numerous public hearings, the American people still do not have a complete accounting of how and why the IRS deprived American citizens' First Amendment rights.

"On February 14, 2014, Commissioner Koskinen was served by this Committee with a subpoena for all of Lerner's emails. On March 4, 2014, under Koskinen's watch, the IRS destroyed 24,000 relevant Lerner emails. Had Koskinen taken common-sense steps to educate employees about the agency's preservation notice, or undertaken any sort of investigation once he learned that key emails were missing, he could have stopped the destruction of evidence.

"In the absence of Lois Lerner's testimony, her emails are critically important to the Committee's investigation. Commissioner John Koskinen's false and misleading statements to Congress about the status of Lerner's emails compounded the problem. His unwillingness to present accurate information about the missing emails delayed and hindered the Committee's efforts, perhaps permanently.

"The IRS is one of the most powerful federal agencies and must be trustworthy. It is not possible to move past the agency's willful targeting of conservative tax-exempt applications as long as the agency refuses to acknowledge the scope of the problem. As leader of the IRS, Commissioner John Koskinen has repeatedly failed to take responsibility for the destruction of evidence by the agency and the numerous misstatements he made to Congress about this matter.

"Because of his actions, and the actions of others at the agency he leads, the American people may never know the complete truth about the IRS' targeting of conservative tax-exempt applications. For these reasons, Commissioner Koskinen should be removed from office."

The House Judiciary Committee is scheduled to hold two hearings on the articles of impeachment. It is highly likely the committee will recommend the articles be forwarded to the full House for votes.

"The fact that officials at the IRS wielded their power to target certain Americans for their political views is both outrageous and contrary to our nation's values," Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) said in a statement last week. "Our government is supposed to work for all Americans, not for a particular partisan agenda. As a result of the IRS' targeting, conservative groups were singled out across the nation, resulting in lengthy paperwork requirements, overly burdensome information requests, and

lengthy, unwarranted delays in their applications.

“Despite repeated congressional efforts to get to the bottom of this matter, Obama Administration officials, including the IRS Commissioner, have consistently undermined the investigation. Over the coming weeks, the House Judiciary Committee will closely examine Commissioner Koskinen’s misconduct and the implications of his actions.”

House conservatives were applauding the latest development. The House Freedom Caucus issued a statement in response to Goodlatte’s that said Koskinen must be “held accountable for years of stonewalling” congressional oversight efforts.

The statement accused the IRS commissioner of “obfuscating justice, providing false testimony before Congress, and failing to hold agency officials liable” for unlawful targeting of groups based on their beliefs.

“Since the revelation that the IRS systematically targeted conservatives for years, the IRS—under Koskinen’s watch—has done little to reform internal protocol to ensure that every American’s First Amendment rights are protected,” the statement read. “Federal officials must be accountable to the American people. It is long past time that Commissioner Koskinen be removed from his post. The House Freedom Caucus strongly supports these efforts to do so.”

The first Judiciary Committee hearing will be held May 24. The second will likely take place in June.