

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

June 16, 2021

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

The Committee on Oversight and Reform must hold a hearing to examine a recent massive leak of the sensitive tax information of thousands of Americans from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Leaks of tax information, particularly by government officials entrusted with caring for that sensitive information, are completely unacceptable and this Committee must conduct oversight to determine who is responsible and how to prevent something like this from ever happening again.

On June 8, 2021, ProPublica published an article relying on “a vast cache of IRS information.”¹ In a gross breach of public trust, it appears someone illegally leaked this information. The article contains details of federal tax filings going back more than a decade involving individuals from across the business and political spectrum, including Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Rupert Murdoch, Michael Bloomberg, and George Soros.² In fact, ProPublica alleges it obtained data “on the tax returns of thousands of the nation’s wealthiest people, covering more than 15 years.”³

Tax returns are filled with personal, private, and sensitive information including social security numbers and intimate details of one’s financial situation. “Returns and return information shall be confidential”⁴ except as otherwise authorized by limited exceptions in federal law. “[N]o officer or employee of the United States... shall disclose any return or return information obtained by him in any manner in connection with his service...”⁵ Furthermore, it is a felony for a federal officer or employee to unlawfully disclose tax return information.⁶ Given

¹ See Eisinger, Jesse et. al., *The Secret IRS Files: Trove of Never-Before-Seen Records Reveal How the Wealthiest Avoid Income Tax*, PRO PUBLICA (Jun. 8, 2021), available at <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-secret-irs-files-trove-of-never-before-seen-records-reveal-how-the-wealthiest-avoid-income-tax>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ 26 U.S.C. § 6103(a).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ 26 U.S.C. § 7213(a)(1).

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney

June 16, 2021

Page 2 of 4

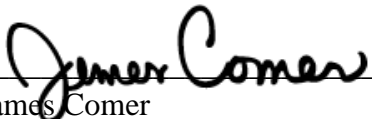
the nature of this data, it is very likely that a federal officer or employee leaked that protected information to ProPublica.

Whether it is George Soros or Rupert Murdoch, every American should have confidence that their personal tax information is secure and safe from privacy violations. Especially as the Biden Administration's proposed budget would vastly increase the size and staffing of the IRS,⁷ we are concerned about the potential for future leaks of sensitive tax information, particularly if such leaks are politically motivated and/or targeted against those who may take unpopular positions. Such leaks will continue to deteriorate the American people's trust in the IRS, and our federal government.

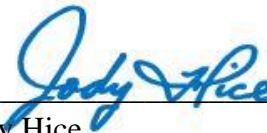
This Committee has a history of conducting strong oversight over government officials at the IRS who abused their position for political gain while thwarting Congressional accountability and oversight.⁸ We therefore urge you to hold a hearing with Biden Administration officials to understand who is responsible for these leaks of sensitive tax information from the IRS. The Committee must also determine what efforts, if any, the Administration is taking to prevent this from ever happening again.

Thank you for your attention to this important request.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government
Operations



Glenn S. Grothman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security



Michael Cloud
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic and
Consumer Policy

⁷ See The White House, Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the U.S. Government, FY 2022*, available at https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/budget_fy22.pdf.

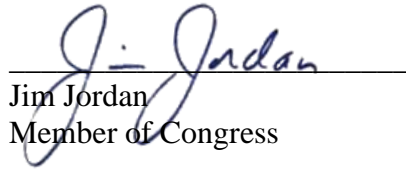
⁸ See H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform, *Resolution Recommending that the House of Representatives find Lois G. Lerner, Former Director, Exempt Organizations, Internal Revenue Service, In Contempt of Congress for Refusal to Comply with a Subpoena Duly Issued by the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform*, 113th Cong. (Apr. 14, 2014) (H. Rep. 113-415), available at <https://www.congress.gov/113/crpt/hrpt415/CRPT-113hrpt415.pdf>.



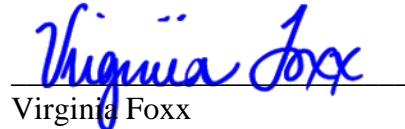
Ralph Norman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment



Pete Sessions
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and
Civil Liberties



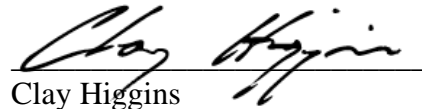
Jim Jordan
Member of Congress



Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress



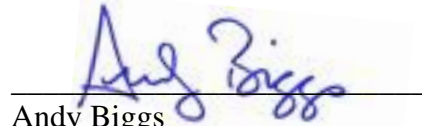
Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



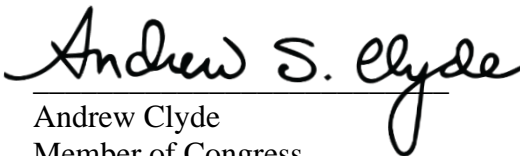
Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



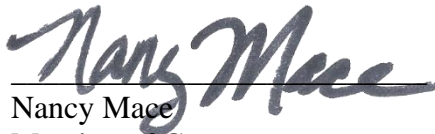
Fred Keller
Member of Congress



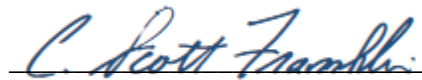
Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



Andrew Clyde
Member of Congress



Nancy Mace
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



Pat Fallon
Member of Congress

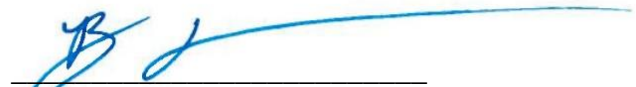


Yvette Herrell
Member of Congress

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney

June 16, 2021

Page 4 of 4



Byron Donalds
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Ro Khanna
Subcommittee on Environment

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties