

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 10, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

We write to inquire into the Department of Justice's (DOJ) efforts to investigate a 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. Those responsible must be pursued to the fullest extent of the law.

On June 8, 2021, ProPublica published an article relying on "a vast cache of IRS information."<sup>1</sup> In a gross breach of public trust, it appears someone illegally leaked this sensitive and non-public 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.<sup>2</sup> In fact, ProPublica alleges it obtained data "on the tax returns of thousands of the nation's wealthiest people, covering more than 15 years."<sup>3</sup>

Tax returns are filled with personal, private, and sensitive information including social security numbers and intimate details of one's financial situation. As you are aware, federal law requires that "[r]eturns and return information shall be confidential"<sup>4</sup> except as otherwise authorized by limited exceptions in federal law. "No 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 . . . ."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it is a felony for a federal officer or employee to unlawfully disclose tax return information.<sup>6</sup> Given the nature of this data, it appears 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

---

<sup>1</sup> See Eisinger, Jesse et. al., *The Secret IRS Files: Trove of Never-Before-Seen Records Reveal How the Wealthiest Avoid Income Tax*, PROPUBLICA (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>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> 26 U.S.C. § 6103(a).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> 26 U.S.C. § 7213(a)(1).

Attorney General Garland

June 10, 2021

Page 2 of 3

Biden Administration's proposed budget would vastly increase the size and staffing of the IRS,<sup>7</sup> we are concerned about the potential for future leaks of sensitive tax information, particularly if such leaks are politically motivated 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.

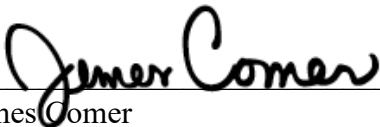
To assist the Committees in conducting oversight over this egregious and potentially criminal leak of personal tax information, we request a staff-level briefing no later than June 17, 2021 on efforts by the DOJ to investigate and bring those responsible to justice, as well as the following:

1. All documents and communications regarding efforts to enforce federal tax confidentiality law within the Department of Justice, particularly as those efforts relate to preventing Internal Revenue Service officials from misusing their positions to disclose confidential tax information; and
2. All documents and communications regarding efforts to investigate the leak of tax records which form the basis of the ProPublica article referenced above, including whether any criminal inquiry has been opened.

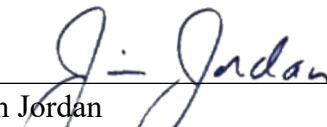
To make arrangements for the briefing, document delivery, or to ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you for your cooperation with this inquiry.

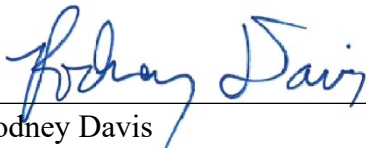
Sincerely,



James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary



Rodney Davis  
Ranking Member  
Committee on House Administration

<sup>7</sup> 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](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/budget_fy22.pdf).

Attorney General Garland

June 10, 2021

Page 3 of 3

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman, Committee on Oversight and Reform  
The Honorable Jerrold Nadler, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary  
The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Chairwoman, Committee on House Administration