

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

April 18, 2013

Mr. Steve Miller
Acting Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Acting Commissioner Miller,

The Internal Revenue Service recently informed employees that, due to tightened budgets under sequestration, five to seven day furloughs would begin to take effect after the tax-filing season. In reaction to this news, Colleen Kelley, President of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU), said in a public statement, “none of these developments is good for the agency, for employees or for taxpayers. IRS employees are middle class workers who have had their pay frozen for over two years. Those furloughs will hurt their ability to pay their bills and serve the public.”

While the IRS considers furloughing employees from their official duties, I am disappointed to learn that agency employees are attending union conferences in New Orleans, Louisiana, Las Vegas, Nevada, and other locations, all while on official federal time. According to documents recently obtained by the Committee, the IRS has approved union employees to spend 20.5 hours of official time in union training between March and May. A February 13, 2013 letter from an IRS official to an NTEU official outlines five NTEU conferences for IRS employees around the country, all attended on official time. While the documents claim that the union chapter will incur all travel expenses, related documents also direct employees “for whom the Service pays the travel” to charge their Citibank Government Travel Charge Card.

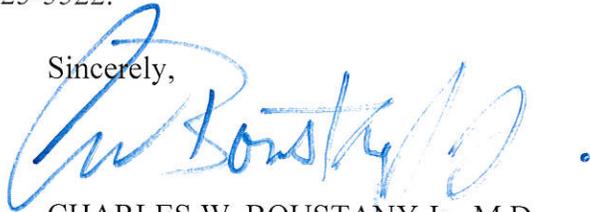
The law allows limited union activity on federal time. However, IRS employees leaving their official duties to attend union training in Las Vegas on the taxpayer’s dime – while other employees are being furloughed – seems questionable at best. I write to request that you provide answers to the following no later than May 2, 2013:

1. Since the start of fiscal year 2012, how many IRS employee official hours were spent on union activity?
2. Since the start of fiscal year 2012, how much has the IRS spent on travel expenses for union activity?
3. Provide all material related to the March-May 2013 NTEU training events.

4. Provide all dates and locations of NTEU conferences in which IRS paid for travel expenses or union members were on official time during the past two years.
5. What training occurs at NTEU conferences that would not otherwise take place at IRS?

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5522.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles W. Boustany Jr.", written in a cursive style.

CHARLES W. BOUSTANY Jr., M.D.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight