

**COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515**

February 19, 2021

The Honorable Charles P. Rettig  
Commissioner  
Internal Revenue Service  
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Commissioner Rettig,

We write to express concern about the status of the current filing season and request information on Internal Revenue Service (IRS) plans to process returns and improve customer service this filing season.

Today, which would normally be the third week of the filing season, the Committee on Ways and Means (Committee) received its first weekly report from the IRS on the status of the 2021 tax return filing season and the news is alarming. One week into a shortened filing season, the IRS reported that it received about 20 million returns on February 12, the opening day of the 2021 return filing season, and processed only 14 million returns. This pace is significantly behind the nearly 40 million returns received and processed last year through February 14, 2020.

The Committee also learned that, this week, two of the four IRS locations processing refund returns—both Kansas City and Austin—were closed due to inclement weather. These closures likely will further impact the processing of returns.

It is unclear why taxpayers have delayed filing this year, but the IRS reported today that visits to its website have more than doubled over last year at this time, from 165 million in 2020 to 369 million in 2021. The Committee also learned that call volume has tripled over the same period last year and only about 25 percent of taxpayers seeking assistance are getting through to the IRS. Of that 25 percent—which represents 6 million calls—only 2.7 million taxpayers spoke with a customer service representative and 3.4 million calls were directed to an automated message. Among other reasons, the need to receive tax assistance may be slowing down the filing of returns.

Given today's report, we ask you to let us know in writing by February 26, 2021 when: (1) the 6.7 million 2019 and prior year tax returns in the backlog will be processed; (2) returns filed this filing season to date will be processed; and (3) additional assistors will be added to IRS toll-free numbers to address taxpayers' questions and

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account issues. Further, we ask that you continue to update the Committee on filing season issues and concerns, including whether the filing season should be extended.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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The Honorable Richard E. Neal, *Chair*  
Committee on Ways and Means



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The Honorable Bill Pascrell Jr., *Chair*  
Subcommittee on Oversight