

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

June 11, 2021

The Honorable Charles P. Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig:

I write to express deep concern with the illegal breach of taxpayer privacy stemming from the confidential taxpayer information that was leaked to the media outlet, ProPublica, and subsequently made public.¹ The series of articles published by ProPublica on June 8, 2021 claim that this “vast trove” of tax data came from the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). Based on ProPublica’s description of the data, it does in fact appear to have come from within the IRS.

Even more concerning, it appears that ProPublica intends to continue publishing sensitive, private taxpayer information over the coming months.² As you know, there are criminal penalties for any unauthorized person accessing or releasing confidential tax information.³ I would like to know what steps the IRS is taking to make sure more private tax data is not released. Therefore, I ask that you provide answers to the following questions:

1. Has the IRS asked ProPublica to stop any further release of confidential taxpayer information?
2. Is the IRS aware of the Department of Justice taking legal action to stop any further release of confidential taxpayer information and has the IRS asked the Department of Justice to do so?
3. Is the IRS aware of any efforts made by either the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration or the Treasury Inspector General to stop any further release of confidential taxpayer information?

I ask that you provide answers to these questions either in writing or in a detailed briefing. Given the seriousness of these issues, I ask that you provide a response by June 17, 2021.

Lastly, based on your testimony before the Senate Finance Committee on June 8, 2021, there are several ongoing investigations into the source of the leaked “trove” of IRS data. I would like to

¹ <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-secret-irs-files-trove-of-never-before-seen-records-reveal-how-the-wealthiest-avoid-income-tax>.

² <https://www.propublica.org/article/propublicas-tax-revelations-lead-to-calls-for-reforms-and-investigation>

³ 26 U.S.C. § 7213; 26 U.S.C § 7216.

be informed of the results of those investigations as well as regular updates on their progress and findings. Thank you for your time and attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Mike Kelly
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
Committee on Ways and Means