

May XX, 2015

The Honorable Jacob J. Lew  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Lew:

The stated mission of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is to “Provide America’s taxpayers top quality service by helping them understand and meet their tax responsibilities....” We are concerned that this year’s tax season has been one of the most difficult for the IRS in meeting its objective to provide taxpayers with quality assistance. Key leaders agree. Not only has National Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson stated that, “we are facing a crisis in taxpayer service,” but also the IRS Commissioner admitted that the Internal Revenue Service has provided “truly an abysmal level of service” to taxpayers this year.

Our constituents have shared many examples of inadequate service this season. First, taxpayers have faced unacceptably long wait times to get through to the IRS on the telephone. According to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration’s Interim Report on the 2015 Filing Season, only 38.5 percent of callers received assistance compared to 74.7 percent last year. Additionally, the IRS hung up on 6.8 million callers (what the IRS calls a “courtesy disconnect”), which is an increase of more than seven times over the previous year. Even when callers get through to a live person, they receive less helpful assistance than in prior years; IRS taxpayer service personnel may answer only “basic” questions. Tax professionals calling the Practitioner Priority Service line experienced wait times of up to six hours and as Nina Olson stated, “The term ‘Priority’ has provided a small measure of comic relief ....”

We understand that a request is pending for a GAO study to review the historical and current use of IRS resources and issue recommendations for the efficient use of resources to meet the needs of taxpayers. Accordingly, we ask that you personally review this year’s unacceptable performance by the IRS. Further, we ask that you provide in writing by June 30<sup>th</sup> your assessment of the problem, the multiple factors contributing to the unacceptable taxpayer service and options for improving IRS service to taxpayers for FY 2015 filing season. We believe it is imperative that sufficient resources are allocated to taxpayer services and that you work to ensure that agency resources will in the future be allocated appropriately to ensure that taxpayers receive adequate assistance.

We look forward to hearing from you in the very near future on your plans for improving taxpayer service next year.

Sincerely,

Peter Roskam  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Gwen Graham  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS