



Robert W. Wood

THE TAX LAWYER

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Lois Lerner Emails Defend Targeting, Warn IRS Employees Emails Can Be Seen By Congress

At tax time, is it any wonder that Americans are afraid of the IRS? Talk of secret emails, and political [targeting criteria](#) are worrisome. President Obama said there was [not a smidgen of corruption](#) at the IRS. He said any missteps were innocent and entirely the fault of [bonehead decisions in local offices](#). If you are still not convinced it is all so innocent, just in time for your April 15 tax filing, a new batch of [IRS documents](#) has been released.

[One email](#) from former IRS firebrand Lois Lerner is particularly revealing. Sure, she said she did nothing wrong, she was the victim, and she still took the Fifth. But in February 2012, she wanted to “put together some training points to help them [IRS staffers] understand the potential pitfalls” of revealing too much information to Congress. This is the IRS version of don’t tell.



The documents also contain a Lerner email from 2013 in which she says she is [willing to take the blame](#) on some aspects of the scandal. Of course, she would later take the Fifth, something the Justice Department just said was OK despite Congress' contempt citation. Ms. Lerner also wrote in one of those sticky emails that she "understands why the IRS criteria" leading to the targeting of Tea Party and other opponents of the President Obama "might raise questions."

Just questions? The documents were released in the case of [Judicial Watch v. IRS](#). Although the latest release still does not reveal all of Lerner's actions, it is [Lerner's most extended public discussion](#), including her defenses. Ms. Lerner's long January 31, 2013 email to investigator Troy Paterson from the Treasury Inspector General's Office shows much:

We understand why the criteria might raise questions....So, I'm not sure how they [TIGTA] investigators are looking at we were politically motivated, or what they are looking for with regard to targeting. I am willing to take the blame for not having provided sufficient direction initially, which may have resulted in front line staff doing things that appeared to be politically motivated, but I am not on board that anything that occurred here shows that the IRS was politically motivated in the actions taken.

[The documents](#) show that Ms. Lerner was aware that Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration had concerns about the political nature of IRS targeting in February 2013. She writes colleagues that it "seems like we may very well be in disagreement [with TIGTA] big time. That means we will need to start drafting our arguments."

On May 14, 2013, a report by [TIGTA revealed](#): "Early in Calendar Year 2010, the IRS began using inappropriate criteria to identify organizations applying for tax-exempt status to (e.g., lists of past and future donors)" and the illegal IRS reviews continued for over 18 months and "delayed processing of targeted groups' applications" preparing for the 2012 presidential election. It was during this period of time that Lerner emailed [former Director of the Office of Rulings and Agreements](#) Holly Paz, attempting to limit information provided by the IRS to Congress about non-profit classifications

[Thursday, February 16, 2012 1:28 PM](#), Lois Lerner wrote Holly Paz that,"We are all a bit concerned about the mention of specific Congress people, practitioners and political parties. Our filed folks are not as sensitive as we are to the fact that anything we write can be public—or at least be seen by Congress. We talked with Nan [Downing – [Director of EO Examinations](#)] and she thought it would be great if R & A could put together some training points to help them understand the potential pitfalls" of disclosure.

We finally also have the June 2011 email in which Lerner told associates that her computer had crashed and her Blackberry no longer worked. The IRS failed to inform Judicial Watch (and the federal court handling this FOIA litigation) that Lerner's computer had crashed and may have

wiped out critical Lerner emails until three years later in June 2014, [when it buried the information on page 15 of a letter](#) from the IRS to Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT).

Indeed, Judicial Watch [previously forced the release](#) of IRS documents that indicate extensive pressure on the IRS by Senator Levin to shut down conservative organizations. The new documents include the [June 14, 2011, email](#) in which Lerner first claimed that “my computer crashed yesterday and my Blackberry doesn’t work in my office” Of course, a great deal has changes since then, or has it?

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