



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on June 10, 2013

Top Democrat Claims White House Not Involved in IRS Scandal

Maryland Representative Elijah Cummings (shown on right), the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight and Reform Committee, [claimed](#) on the CBS *Face the Nation* program June 9 that at least one employee in the Cincinnati IRS office said that discrimination against conservatives wasn't initiated by White House influence. But Cummings' claim seems contrary to evidence available to the public.



The [interview](#) cited by Cummings was from one IRS employee in the Cincinnati office, where conservative and Tea Party groups were targeted for special scrutiny:

Interviewer: "Do you have any reason to believe that anyone in the White House was involved in the decision to screen tea party cases?"

IRS manager: "I have no reason to believe that."

The IRS manager [described](#) himself as a conservative Republican in interviews, but according to a CBS News summary of the transcript, the man amazingly claimed "he did not believe the targeting was motivated by a political bias against conservatives."

Of course, it's clear beyond any reasonable doubt there was a political bias; the only question that remains is: Who directed the bias? And it's perhaps important to point out that the IRS employee's statement above was not a claim that Washington-directed discrimination didn't happen, or even that the employee was in a position to know either way.

Perhaps more importantly, it's clear that Washington politician [Lois Lerner](#) (who pled the Fifth Amendment right to remain silent in congressional testimony last month and was subsequently placed on administrative leave) was intimately involved in the operations in the Cincinnati office, and top IRS officials — IRS Commissioner [Douglas Shulman](#) and Non-Profit and Government Entities Commissioner [Sarah Hall Ingram](#) — visited the White House on at least a weekly basis during the time of focus on Tea Party applications for non-profit status.

Cummings also claimed June 2: "So far, no witnesses who have appeared before the Committee have identified any IRS official in Washington DC who directed employees in Cincinnati to use 'tea party' or similar terms to screen applicants for extra scrutiny."

Of course, the House Oversight and Reform Committee [released](#) some information the same day revealing just such direction from the IRS in Washington. Chairman Darrell Issa's congressional investigators have deposed a number of IRS officials at the Cincinnati office where non-profit conservative organizations were targeted, and found that Washington had directed IRS employees to target conservatives. The following are excerpts from those depositions:

Q: So is it your perspective that ultimately the responsible parties for the decisions that were reported by the IG are not in the Cincinnati office?



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A: I don't know how to answer that question. I mean, from an agent standpoint, we didn't do anything wrong. We followed directions based on other people telling us what to do.

Q: And you ultimately followed directions from Washington; is that correct?

A: If direction had come down from Washington, yes.

Q: But with respect to the particular scrutiny that was given to Tea Party applications, those directions emanated from Washington; is that right?

A: I believe so.

The investigation noted that one "senior IRS Cincinnati employee" explained that they were told to target conservatives and Republicans:

Q: But you specifically recall that the BOLO [Be on the look-out] terms included "Tea Party?"

A: Yes, I do.

Q: And it was your understanding — was it your understanding that the purpose of the BOLO was to identify Tea Party groups?

A: That is correct.

Q: Was it your understanding that the purpose of the BOLO was to identify conservative groups?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Was it your understanding that the purpose of the BOLO was to identify Republican groups?

A: Yes, it was.

And the investigation revealed that some agents were told by supervisors to report audits directly to Washington:

Q: Okay. So she asked you to send particular parts of these applications.

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: And that was unusual. Did you say that?

A: Yes.

Q: And she indicated that Washington had requested these specific parts of these specific applications; is that right?

A: Correct.

By June 5, the *Wall Street Journal* had reported that one Cincinnati employee, Elizabeth Hofacre, [cited](#) Washington-based IRS lawyer Carter Hull as directing the focus upon conservative and Tea Party groups. "I was essentially a front person," Hofacre told the committee, "because I had no autonomy or no authority to act on [applications] without Carter Hull's influence or input."

Meanwhile, conservative media outlets such as Fox News' [Huckabee](#) and [The Sean Hannity Show](#) have focused upon how conservative groups, such as Catherine Engelbrecht's "True the Vote" organization, have seen oppression from multiple branches of the federal government. True the Vote encountered the wrath of multiple federal agencies, including the IRS, FBI, OSHA, ATF, and EPA. In a telling interview on the *Huckabee* show, Engelbrecht stated that she has had 17 requests for information from these various federal agencies, wasted thousands of man-hours and copied thousands of pages for her little



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non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating voter fraud.

Representative Cummings also [called for](#) release of the full transcripts of the committee interviews by the end of this week in his *Face the Nation* interview.



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