



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on May 29, 2013

IRS Scandal: It Wasn't Just Cincinnati (and May Involve Other Federal Agencies)

The Obama administration's key defense in the IRS scandal is falling apart. Up until now, the administration has relied upon the [implicit claim](#) that IRS targeting of conservative groups applying for non-profit status was simply the actions of a few rogue agents in the Cincinnati office of the IRS. But it is increasingly clear that the targeting of conservatives was directed from Washington, as multiple IRS offices have now been shown to have been involved in such efforts.



NBC News [reported](#) May 28, "Additional scrutiny of conservative organizations' activities by the IRS did not solely originate in the agency's Cincinnati office, with requests for information coming from other offices and often bearing the signatures of higher-ups at the agency, according to attorneys representing some of the targeted groups." Reporting by the local [Fox News affiliate has also belied](#) the White House's claim. And the conservative website the Daily Caller has [identified](#) at least five different offices of the IRS that targeted conservatives.

The [signature](#) of director of the IRS Exempt Organizations division Lois Lerner was on at least some of the letters demanding broad submission of information to the IRS from conservative organizations. Lerner — who was placed on administrative leave with pay last week after pleading the Fifth Amendment in congressional hearings — was based out of Washington. So her signature on letters of inquiry to conservative groups thoroughly debunks the White House party line.

Jay Sekulow, an attorney representing 27 conservative political advocacy organizations that applied to the IRS for tax-exempt status, provided some of the letters to NBC News. "We've dealt with 15 agents, including tax law specialists — that's lawyers — from four different offices, including [the] Treasury [Department] in Washington, D.C.," Sekulow [told](#) NBC News. "So the idea that this is a couple of rogue agents in Cincinnati is not correct."

Although the IRS claims it is no longer targeting conservative organizations, invasive information requests [continue to be submitted up to the current month](#), according to Sekulow.

For Lerner, harassment of conservative organizations goes all the way back to the 1990s, when she was



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an official at the Federal Elections Commission and [harassed](#) Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition.

Henry Miller of *Forbes* [says](#) the IRS scandal is "only the tip of the iceberg," and he may be right. The IRS scandal has put other attacks on conservatives during the Obama administration in a new light, such as:

- The dramatic seizure of Gibson Guitar stock in 2009 [under legally dubious grounds](#) while Gibson's competitors ([which were donors to Democrats](#)) were not troubled — even though they used the same Indian wood that was allegedly labeled contraband.

- [Blatant EPA discrimination](#) in fee waivers against conservative organizations such as the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

- The harrasing of Catherine Engelbrecht's "True the Vote" organization by multiple federal agencies, including the IRS, FBI, OSHA, ATF, and EPA. In a telling [interview](#) on Fox News' *Huckabee* show, Engelbrecht explained 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 non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating voter fraud.

To conservative organizations at the receiving end of IRS and other federal agency targeting, it has meant a loss of focus on their mission by extra time devoted to paperwork by management, as well as costs associated with hiring extra lawyers and accountants. Perhaps even more importantly, the delay in receiving non-profit status — and some of the targeted conservative organizations are still waiting for IRS approval three years later — means lost income in the form of ineligibility for grants from foundations and corporations that donate only to non-profits that have IRS approval.

One would think that targeting one side of the political spectrum with political persecution by government would in the post-Watergate era unite all Americans in horror and generate universal revulsion. Not so. The political Left has learned just the opposite lesson. (Ironically, [Nixon's White House was unable to get the IRS to persecute leftist political organizations.](#)) To the far Left, the IRS didn't go nearly far enough:

- The *New York Times* [claims](#) that "a close examination of these groups and others reveals an array of election activities that tax experts and former I.R.S. officials said would provide a legitimate basis for flagging them for closer review."

- The *Washington Post's* Joel Achenbach goes a step further, [claiming](#) of Lois Lerner that Americans shouldn't "sacrifice civil servants for the sake of short-term political optics. In our high-stakes political wars, we shouldn't let anyone turn their firepower on innocent civilians."

- Former National Public Radio CEO Ken Stern [praised](#) the IRS in a column for the leftist Daily Beast, exclaiming "good for the IRS for rousing itself from its long slumber. Yes, they screwed up badly, maybe because their investigative skill set is so rusty from disuse. Their failure was not that they scrutinized too hard or too many, but that they scrutinized too few."

- The *Los Angeles Times's* Michael Hiltzik [wrote](#) May 25, "The probe into the supposed 'targeting' of conservative groups overlooks the fact that the tax agency does a good job despite its meager resources."

Much of the political Left has relied on the claim that the use of unlimited money by 501(c)4 organizations in the wake of the 2009 [Citizens United decision](#) was a new stage in American politics. Of course, the Left has used these "loopholes" for decades. The tax-exempt NAACP [spent](#) \$10 million



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trying to defeat George W. Bush in 2000, and unions spend tens of millions every election year — almost always on behalf of Democrats.



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