

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 10, 2021

Charles P. Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
111 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig,

We respectfully request that the Internal Revenue System (IRS) take additional steps to address the severe backlog of unprocessed tax returns and the lack of customer service. While the backlog has plagued the IRS for years, it has been exacerbated since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you are aware, the IRS's mission is to "provide America's taxpayers top quality service by helping them understand and meet their tax responsibilities and by applying the tax law with integrity and fairness to all."¹ Nevertheless, many of our constituents have reached out over the past few months to inform our offices that they have yet to receive their 2020 tax refunds and that they are unable to get anyone at the IRS on the phone to assist them. Additionally, the National Taxpayer Advocate Service recently published a midyear report to Congress which found that the IRS held an unprecedented 35.3 million unprocessed returns and only answered 7% of the 167 million callers who reached out to the IRS for assistance during the 2021 filing season.²

While we understand the unique circumstances and challenges brought on by the pandemic and that the IRS may have made progress in reducing the number of unprocessed returns, this backlog represents a fourfold increase from 2019, when the IRS closed its filing season with 7.4 million unprocessed returns. As a result, these unprecedented backlogs are leading to millions of our constituents waiting months for their much-needed refunds and stimulus payments. Furthermore, live assistance by phone is rare with millions more of our constituents trying to settle issues with past tax returns and unable to get a human being on the telephone.

Rather than taking steps to expedite processing times by returning more employees to in-person work or making more telephone agents available to taxpayers, the IRS instead simply encourages taxpayers to be patient and wait. However, it is critical that these backlogs are processed because most taxpayers overpay on their taxes through wage withholding or estimated tax payments and are entitled to receive refunds when they file their returns. Long wait times for refunds are

¹ The agency, its mission and statutory authority. Internal Revenue Service. (2021, July 21).
<https://www.irs.gov/about-irs/the-agency-its-mission-and-statutory-authority>.

² National Taxpayer Advocate Objectives Report to Congress. Taxpayer Advocate Service. (2021, June 30).
<https://www.taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov/reports/2022-objectives-report-to-congress/newsroom/>.


particularly harmful this year, due to forced lockdowns from the government, and especially for low-income Americans eligible for certain credits or those still waiting on stimulus checks.

In response to these concerns, we urge you to pursue any and all available means to improve efficiency and service to our constituents, including reducing the number of IRS employees who are remote working, increasing capacity at call centers, and reprioritize improved tax administration and taxpayer service.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you to address these important issues within the IRS.

Sincerely,


Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress


Bill Posey
Member of Congress


Tom McClintock
Member of Congress


Bob Good
Member of Congress


Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress


Ben Cline
Member of Congress


Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress


Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress