

September 16, 2013

Out of the spot light, House IRS investigators have been grinding out the work. [WSJ Editors](#) comment.

Congress's investigation into the IRS targeting of conservatives has been continuing out of the Syria headlines, and it's turning up news. Emails unearthed by the House Ways and Means Committee between former Director of Exempt Organizations Lois Lerner and her staff raise doubts about IRS claims that the targeting wasn't politically motivated and that low-level employees in Cincinnati masterminded the operation.

In a February 2011 email, Ms. Lerner advised her staff—including then Exempt Organizations Technical Manager Michael Seto and then Rulings and Agreements director Holly Paz—that a Tea Party matter is "very dangerous," and is something "Counsel and [Lerner adviser] Judy Kindell need to be in on." Ms. Lerner adds, "Cincy should probably NOT have these cases."

That's a different tune than the IRS sang in May when former IRS Commissioner Steven Miller said the agency's overzealous enforcement was the work of two "rogue" employees in Cincinnati. When the story broke, Ms. Lerner suggested that her office had been unaware of the pattern of targeting until she read about it in the newspaper. "So it was pretty much we started seeing information in the press that raised questions for us, and we went back and took a look," she said in May. ...

[Carol Platt Liebau](#) has more.

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Hm. So is it a coincidence, as reported [here](#) on Townhall, that Lois Lerner colluded with a lawyer from the FEC to try to influence the record before the FEC -- at least twice -- and illegally sharing confidential information? The answer has always been obvious; now it is increasingly so.

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In City Journal, [Steve Malanga](#) asks "Who will audit the auditors?"

The Internal Revenue Service's targeting of conservative groups has revived old fears about the agency's vast taxing and auditing powers, so easy to abuse. But the IRS isn't alone in holding those powers. Across the country, states and municipalities have endowed thousands of revenue and audit bureaucracies with similar capabilities. Critics complain that officials use these entities to harass enemies and help allies. The evidence makes clear just how well-founded those concerns are—especially since these agencies typically receive far less scrutiny than the IRS does.

Under the administration of Democratic governor Bill Richardson, New Mexico's labor department sparked controversy in 2006 for auditing the state's Republican Party. The audit, launched shortly after the party criticized the governor harshly, was meant to examine whether it was complying with state laws on employment taxes. After initially claiming that a computer had randomly chosen the GOP for scrutiny, the state admitted that an employee of the labor department had selected the party. Under fire from state newspapers, the Richardson administration turned the audit over to a private firm. The controversy faded after the firm found the Republican Party "squeaky clean," as the Santa Fe New Mexican put it, though the paper noted that the audit was "more harassment than just due diligence on the labor department's part." ...

While the IRS was harassing tea party groups, they were assisting Obama voters. [Investor's Business Daily](#) with the story.

At the same time the IRS harassed Republican nonprofit groups during the 2012 political campaign, it selectively advised black churches and other Democrat nonprofits on how far they can go in campaigning for President Obama and other Democrats.

This raw exercise in political favoritism has not been reported in the context of the still-smoldering IRS scandal, in which the agency in 2012 audited big GOP donors and blocked Tea Party groups trying to obtain tax-exempt status as part of what House investigators suspect was an effort to re-elect the president.

But that same year, top officials with both the IRS and Justice Department — including the IRS commissioner and attorney general — met in Washington with several dozen prominent black church ministers representing millions of voters to brief them on how to get their flocks out to vote without breaking federal tax laws.

The "summit" on energizing the black vote in houses of worship was hosted by the Democrat-controlled Congressional Black Caucus inside the U.S. Capitol on May 30, 2012.

[The Daily Caller](#) has an example of how the IRS may have been recruited by greens to audit a land owner.

The Inspector General of the U.S. Treasury Department is investigating whether an environmental group pressured the Internal Revenue Service into auditing a Virginia farmer and tea partier, according to attorneys, policy analysts and other sources familiar with the case.

But the investigation has not discouraged IRS auditors, who are expanding their audit of Martha Boneta in what has become a high-profile dispute over property rights.

Boneta told The Daily Caller in an interview that she has been asked to submit "reams and reams" of new information in addition to the original audit request.

Boneta said that she and her legal representatives recently met with a special agent of the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Information (TIGTA) "on two separate days, for almost five hours."

While Boneta would not comment on the details of the meeting, she did say the “close coordination and collusion” between the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) and the Fauquier County government in Virginia could become central to the ongoing investigation. The meetings with the special agent took place earlier this summer and with witnesses as recently as this past week. ...

And to top off the day, [World News Daily](#) has a story on how the IRS is beating up veterans.

The Internal Revenue Service, which has been caught harassing conservative organizations with demands for personal ideological details, such as the content of prayers, now is doing the same to veterans’ groups.

Louis J. Celli Jr., director of the National Legislative Division at the American Legion, spoke exclusively with WND about the developing problem.

He said that officials at American Legion headquarters have been getting calls from a number of the group’s outposts complaining of IRS agents who, during the course of their inspections, were demanding personal information.

The information, Celli said, includes birth dates and Social Security numbers of members.

Celli said one outpost in Texas, where officials were unable to comply immediately with the requirements, was fined \$12,000, or \$1,000 for each of 12 days it failed to produce the documents the IRS demanded.

Celli lamented that such actions mean the American Legion will have less money for many of the veteran-related programs it sponsors. ...

[The Blaze](#) has some good news about citizens fighting back against traffic cameras. *Citizens across the country have grumbled about speed cameras, but someone in Wicomico County, Maryland appears to be making a physical — and political — point.*

A [photo posted on the blog SBY News](#) shows a traffic camera that’s been spray-painted over the lens and tagged with the year 1776, the year the U.S. declared independence.

“Good for them!” blog publisher Joe Alberero wrote.

Some commenting on the post seem to agree. Here are a few:

- Everytime I drive past one, I secretly wish someone would do that. I would gladly donate to their bail if they get caught.*
 - I love it then the top it off 1776 nice touch*
 - Next, surveillance cameras for the surveillance cameras. ...*
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WSJ - Editorial

Lois Lerner's Own Words

Emails undercut the official IRS story on political targeting.

Congress's investigation into the IRS targeting of conservatives has been continuing out of the Syria headlines, and it's turning up news. Emails unearthed by the House Ways and Means Committee between former Director of Exempt Organizations Lois Lerner and her staff raise doubts about IRS claims that the targeting wasn't politically motivated and that low-level employees in Cincinnati masterminded the operation.

In a February 2011 email, Ms. Lerner advised her staff—including then Exempt Organizations Technical Manager Michael Seto and then Rulings and Agreements director Holly Paz—that a Tea Party matter is "very dangerous," and is something "Counsel and [Lerner adviser] Judy Kindell need to be in on." Ms. Lerner adds, "Cincy should probably NOT have these cases."

That's a different tune than the IRS sang in May when former IRS Commissioner Steven Miller said the agency's overzealous enforcement was the work of two "rogue" employees in Cincinnati. When the story broke, Ms. Lerner suggested that her office had been unaware of the pattern of targeting until she read about it in the newspaper. "So it was pretty much we started seeing information in the press that raised questions for us, and we went back and took a look," she said in May.

Earlier this summer, IRS lawyer Carter Hull, who oversaw the review of many Tea Party cases and questionnaires, testified that his oversight began in April 2010. Tea party cases under review are "being supervised by Chip Hull at each step," Ms. Paz wrote to Ms. Lerner in a February 2011 email. "He reviews info from TPs, correspondence to TPs etc. No decisions are going out of Cincy until we go all the way through the process with the c3 and c4 cases here." TP stands for Tea Party, and she means 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) nonprofit groups.

The emails also put the targeting in the context of the media and Congressional drumbeat over the impact of conservative campaign spending on the 2012 elections. On July 10, 2012 then Lerner-adviser Sharon Light emailed Ms. Lerner a National Public Radio story on how outside money was making it hard for Democrats to hold their Senate majority.

The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee had complained to the Federal Election Commission that conservative groups like Crossroads GPS and Americans for Prosperity should be treated as political committees, rather than 501(c)(4)s, which are tax-exempt social welfare groups that do not have to disclose their donors.

"Perhaps the FEC will save the day," Ms. Lerner wrote back later that morning.

That response suggests Ms. Lerner's political leanings, and it also raises questions about Ms. Lerner's intentions in a separate email exchange she had when an FEC investigator inquired about the status of the conservative group the American Future Fund. The FEC and IRS don't have the authority to share that information under section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code. But the bigger question is why did they want to? After the FEC inquiry, the American Future Fund also got a questionnaire from the IRS.

Ms. Lerner famously invoked her right against self-incrimination rather than testify under oath to Congress. The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee reported this summer that its investigation had found Ms. Lerner had sent official IRS documents to her personal email account, and many questions remain unanswered. Democrats want to pretend the IRS scandal is over, but Ms. Lerner's role deserves much more exposure.

Townhall

[Newly Released IRS Emails Reveal Depths of Lerner's Duplicity](#)

by Carol Platt Liebau



Recently revealed emails highlight the fact that [just about everything Lois Lerner and others said when the Tea Party targeting scandal broke was a lie.](#)

The emails indicate that Lerner was highly involved in scrutinizing Tea Party applications -- and even contain language like "Cincy [the Cincinnati IRS office] should "probably NOT have these cases." Of course, that's a [pretty sharp contrast from Lerner's initial statements](#) in May that "So it was pretty much we started seeing information in the press that raised questions for us, and we went back and took a look." It's obvious that she didn't learn about the targeting from the newspapers . . . to put it mildly.

Perhaps one of the most sinister statements in the newly-released Lerner emails is the following: After receiving an article about Democrats complaining about anonymous donors financing attack ads against them, Lerner wrote, ""Perhaps the (Federal Election Commission) will save the day."

Hm. So is it a coincidence, as reported [here](#) on Townhall, that Lois Lerner colluded with a lawyer from the FEC to try to influence the record before the FEC -- at least twice -- and [illegally sharing confidential information](#)? The answer has always been obvious; now it is increasingly so.

The more the facts in the IRS targeting scandal emerges, the more obvious it becomes that this was a partisan operation, in which law-abiding Americans were discriminated against based only on their political views.

This is completely antithetical to how healthy democratic republics are supposed to work, and there need to be consequences -- severe ones.

City Journal

Who Will Audit the Auditors?

State and local bureaucracies often abuse their taxing authority.

by Steven Malanga

The Internal Revenue Service's targeting of conservative groups has revived old fears about the agency's vast taxing and auditing powers, so easy to abuse. But the IRS isn't alone in holding those powers. Across the country, states and municipalities have endowed thousands of revenue and audit bureaucracies with similar capabilities. Critics complain that officials use these entities to harass enemies and help allies. The evidence makes clear just how well-founded those concerns are—especially since these agencies typically receive far less scrutiny than the IRS does.

Under the administration of Democratic governor Bill Richardson, New Mexico's labor department sparked controversy in 2006 for auditing the state's Republican Party. The audit, launched shortly after the party criticized the governor harshly, was meant to examine whether it was complying with state laws on employment taxes. After initially claiming that a computer had randomly chosen the GOP for scrutiny, the state admitted that an employee of the labor department had selected the party. Under fire from state newspapers, the Richardson administration turned the audit over to a private firm. The controversy faded after the firm found the Republican Party "squeaky clean," as the *Santa Fe New Mexican* put it, though the paper noted that the audit was "more harassment than just due vigilance on the labor department's part."

Taxing and auditing to silence critics can backfire. In 1997, when the Puerto Rican newspaper *El Nuevo Día* ran a tough article about the island's governor at the time, Pedro Rossello, the Rossello administration pulled \$6 million in government advertising from the paper and conducted a tax audit of a construction company owned by *El Nuevo*'s publisher. The newspaper sued and the administration settled, promising that its future actions would be "based on legitimate, non-retaliatory reasons unrelated to news coverage."

Often, however, the use of taxing powers for political purposes becomes known only through happenstance. In Bristol, Pennsylvania, a private firm that handled tax matters for the city hit a mayoral critic with an audit in 2000. One of the firm's employees found a manager's note indicating that the mayor himself had requested the audit. She turned the note over to the audit's target, who then refused to cooperate. The town fined him, but a judge later threw out the penalty after hearing about the circumstances. A similar case took place in 1990, when Florida's director of revenue had to resign after a whistleblower said that she had directed her staff to audit a political opponent of her husband, at the time the president of the state's AFL-CIO. The official, Katie Tucker, told staff that she believed that the man was laundering money and

involved with organized crime, though an investigation found no basis for the suspicions. Tucker pleaded no contest to official misconduct.

Elected officials sometimes use these agencies to help friends. Between 2008 and 2010, former auditors with the Idaho Tax Commission accused the agency of cutting favorable deals for some individuals and firms, either forgiving their tax bills or reducing amounts owed. In one case, the ex-auditors alleged, the commission's chairman gave a friend confidential tax data about a local business with which the friend had a dispute. The local prosecuting attorney's investigation found insufficient evidence to bring charges, but the commission's chairman resigned his position anyway, saying, "I know there needs to be change."

At other times, bureaucrats abuse their tax and audit powers to protect those very powers. Oregon business interests led a movement in 1995 to remove tax appeals from the jurisdiction of the state's Department of Revenue, saying that the agency shouldn't decide appeals of its own cases. Shortly after testifying in favor of the reform, one of the movement's leaders had to go through a state income-tax audit. The Department of Revenue said that the audit was routine, but the man's charge that the agency lacked independence gained some credibility after its chief hearings officer testified that he frequently faced pressure to rule in favor of the state and that he had been demoted after speaking out in favor of reform. The legislature eventually passed a law placing tax appeals under the purview of the Oregon Tax Court.

These cases underscore the power of taxing agencies to harass the public. So while the IRS scandal has stoked understandable outrage, it should also prompt an equally troubling question: Who is watching all the other tax and audit authorities around America?

Steven Malanga is the senior editor of City Journal and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. His latest book is Shakedown: The Continuing Conspiracy Against the American Taxpayer.

IBD

[IRS Gave Black Nonprofits Preferential Treatment](#)

by Paul Sperry

At the same time the IRS harassed Republican nonprofit groups during the 2012 political campaign, it selectively advised black churches and other Democrat nonprofits on how far they can go in campaigning for President Obama and other Democrats.

This raw exercise in political favoritism has not been reported in the context of the still-smoldering IRS scandal, in which the agency in 2012 audited big GOP donors and blocked Tea Party groups trying to obtain tax-exempt status as part of what House investigators suspect was an effort to re-elect the president.

But that same year, top officials with both the IRS and Justice Department — including the IRS commissioner and attorney general — met in Washington with several dozen prominent black church ministers representing millions of voters to brief them on how to get their flocks out to vote without breaking federal tax laws.

The "summit" on energizing the black vote in houses of worship was hosted by the Democrat-controlled Congressional Black Caucus inside the U.S. Capitol on May 30, 2012.

The day before the special IRS training session, then-Black Caucus Chairman Rep. Emanuel Cleaver predicted Obama would get 95% of the African-American vote — but only if black pastors "encourage" them to get to the polls. (He ended up getting over 93% of the black vote.)

IRS Goes To Church

At the time, many African-Americans were unhappy that Obama came out in support of gay marriage. So Democrats gathered them in Washington for a "pep talk," which included assurances their tax exemption would be safe if they helped deliver the vote.

It's not clear if the White House helped organize the unusual event, but two key Cabinet members — Attorney General Eric Holder and IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman — both spoke at length to the black church leaders.

Joining them was senior IRS official Peter Lorenzetti, who runs the agency's tax-exempt organizations division. He gave a technical briefing in which he advised against endorsing from the pulpit any candidates by name or distributing voter cheat sheets.

Then Lorenzetti hastened to add: "It is important to note, however, that an organization exempt under 501(c)3 — in this case the church or a religious organization — can conduct educational election activities," including holding political debates or even inviting candidates to speak to congregants.

Get-out-the-vote activities also are allowed, including driving church members to polls and knocking on doors to register people to vote.

"There are so many things that you can do and you should do," stressed Black Caucus member Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C. For example, he instructed pastors, "You are permitted to endorse a candidate in your individual capacity as a citizen. You can appear on a (TV or radio) program away from the church and be presented as the pastor. You can do that."

He told ministers not to worry that IRS agents "with binoculars" are spying on their churches from across the street. "The IRS does not have the authority to tell a church how it conducts its affairs," said Butterfield.

In an MSNBC interview prior to the briefing, Cleaver, D-Mo., explained: "We want to let (the pastors) know that there is a theological responsibility to participate in the political process. We're going to encourage them to encourage their people" to get out the vote.

Double Standard

U.S. tax code prohibits churches and other nonprofits from "participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office."

The ban includes donations, endorsements, fundraising or any other activity "that may be beneficial or detrimental to any particular candidate." In the past, black churches have been known to pass out voting guides to members in violation of IRS rules.

Washington constitutional scholar Jonathan Turley at the time blogged that the special campaign training session offered these Obama supporters — with the direct participation of the IRS chief and attorney general — was a "raw" display of political favoritism.

"If (former GOP Attorney General) Alberto Gonzalez went to Congress to brief evangelical religious leaders on campaigning in the presidential election, the hue and cry would be deafening," Turley said.

Non-black clergy were not afforded the same legal training in campaigning tactics by the Obama administration.

At the time, Turley did not know that the IRS had targeted GOP donors and nonprofits opposed to the president or that it had temporarily suspended tax audits of churches, which it publicly announced just prior to the election.

"We are holding any potential church audits in abeyance," Russell Renwicks of the agency's Tax-Exempt and Government Entities division was quoted by Bloomberg BNA as saying in October 2012. The agency made the decision despite being bombarded by complaints about churches getting involved in the election.

The high-level legal briefing for Obama supporters made just passing news during the election. But the double standard it poses now in the wake of the IRS scandal is troubling.

Perhaps more disturbing, Turley remarked, is that the two federal law enforcement officials who would be the ultimate decision-makers in future cases involving IRS tax fraud and exemption violations were front and center in counseling tax-exempt groups that might bump up against those laws.

Daily Caller

[IRS inspector general probes whether agency abused Virginia tea partier](#)

by Kevin Mooney

The Inspector General of the U.S. Treasury Department is investigating whether an environmental group pressured the Internal Revenue Service into auditing a Virginia farmer and tea partier, according to attorneys, policy analysts and other sources familiar with the case.

But the investigation has not discouraged IRS auditors, who are expanding their audit of Martha Boneta in what has become a high-profile dispute over property rights.

Boneta told The Daily Caller in an interview that she has been asked to submit "reams and reams" of new information in addition to the original audit request.

Boneta said that she and her legal representatives recently met with a special agent of the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Information (TIGTA) "on two separate days, for almost five hours."

While Boneta would not comment on the details of the meeting, she did say the “close coordination and collusion” between the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) and the Fauquier County government in Virginia could become central to the ongoing investigation. The meetings with the special agent took place earlier this summer and with witnesses as recently as this past week.

“We cannot confirm or deny that there is any investigation,” a spokesman in the TIGTA office told TheDC. “We are legally prohibited from commenting. But if you want to do a story, no one here can object.”

Boneta, who is actively pushing for new property rights legislation in the state, is convinced she is on the receiving end of a “deliberate, persistent, coordinated assault.”

She became the subject of an IRS audit after the PEC sued her over the terms of a conservation easement that sits on her property and after Fauquier County issued her a series of citations based on alleged zoning violations that could amount to thousands of dollars in fines.

Email messages and other written information Boneta obtained through a Freedom of Information Request (FOIA) show PEC and Fauquier County government officials discussed her case at length in a steady chain of emails and other written messages that were exchanged in 2011 over a period of several months.

At one point, Peter Schwartz — a county supervisor who previously served as a PEC board member — discussed having Boneta’s mortgage called in with Phillip Thomas, a real estate mogul who previously owned the land that includes Boneta’s farm.

In his correspondence, Schwartz made it clear that county officials did not approve of how Boneta used her property. In response to Schwartz, Thomas’s law firm then sent a letter to Boneta’s mortgage company requesting Boneta’s mortgage be called in or sold.

Thomas, who is the owner of Talbot Real Estate in Middleburg, Va., sold the property to the PEC back in 2000. The PEC then sold a 64-acre portion of this land to Boneta in 2006.

The PEC is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization based in Warrenton, Va. dedicated to preserving the “rural economy, natural resources, history and beauty” of a 9-county region of Virginia. The PEC wields control over farmland in the region by convincing farmers to sign onto “conservation easements,” which restrict how farmers can develop their own property in exchange for tax benefits. The land the PEC sold to Boneta included a conservation easement.

She doesn’t know what exactly led to the IRS auditing her, but she suspects at least one well-connected PEC official was involved.

Margaret “Peggy” Richardson — who served as President Clinton’s IRS commissioner in the 1990s — is now an executive board member of the PEC.

But in an interview with TheDC, Richardson denied having any knowledge of Boneta’s audit.

“I don’t know Ms. Boneta, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen her in person or on TV,” Richardson said. “I certainly have no interest in orchestrating anything concerning her.”

Richardson said it’s understandable that the Boneta audit would be viewed with suspicion, given “the external climate” surrounding the IRS and the ongoing congressional investigations into the agency’s treatment of tea party groups.

“I’m not aware of any internal IG investigation that involves me or any PEC officials,” she told TheDC.

The audit identifies Fairfax, Va.-based Byron C. Jose as the IRS agent requesting information from Boneta about her Fauquier County farm for the 2010 and 2011 tax periods.

The property in question — called “Liberty Farm” — covers 68 acres in the Paris, Va. section of the county, about an hour’s ride from Washington D.C.

“It has taken months to complete everything the auditor is now asking for,” Boneta said. “They are even asking me for receipts that are less than 50 dollars.”

Boneta’s legal battles have led Virginia Republicans to push for passage of the “Boneta Bill” in the state legislature, which is designed to protect the right of farmers to engage in commercial activities.

Originally, the bill was proposed as an amendment to the existing Right-to-Farm Act, which critics say is loosely worded and ineffectual. A new version will reportedly be introduced sometime after the November elections.

Both the PEC and the county are on record opposing the “Boneta Bill.”

Zoning Board administrator Kim Johnson claims that Boneta sold fresh fruit, vegetables, beverages and homemade handicrafts out of her on-site farm store, in violation of the amended zoning laws, despite the fact that Boneta had a retail farm store business license.

But Mark Fitzgibbons, a Northern Virginia attorney who specializes in constitutional law, said in an interview that the zoning amendments were “conspicuously used only against Boneta” and that “county officials concocted false information to support charges, which resulted in the violation of traditional farm commerce and constitutional rights.”

The Boneta Bill is designed to “reverse unlawful acts by the county, and to give farmers remedies for when counties violate their rights,” he added. Fitzgibbons had a hand in crafting the legislation.

Fitzgibbons said he learned of the IRS audit from Schwartz, the county supervisor with close ties to the PEC who sought to have Boneta’s mortgage called in.

Fitzgibbons told TheDC that Schwartz informed him of the audit at the county supervisor’s private residence on Saturday, July 21, 2012 — several days before Boneta received official notice.

It is a felony offense for any government official to knowingly reveal that an audit is in motion.

“Peter did not reveal to me who told him, but that’s probable cause that someone at the IRS, and maybe elsewhere, intentionally broke the law by disclosing the audit,” Fitzgibbons said. “It fits into a larger, ugly pattern of the feds breaking the law to intimidate and malign everyday Americans.”

Fitzgibbons says he met with the inspector general agent who met with Boneta in Falls Church, Va. to discuss the audit.

The official IRS notice of the audit arrived in the mail to Boneta just a few weeks before the Fauquier County Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) ruled in August to uphold a series of \$5,000 per day fines based on the citations that were initially issued in April 2012.

Boneta has been forced to close her farm store. She is now suing the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors, the county’s Board of Zoning and Johnson, and the zoning administrator for \$2 million in damages in Fauquier County Circuit Court.

Boneta points out that she has a “retail business license” and should have been grandfathered into any zoning changes that were made.

If special groups and government officials succeed in silencing individual Americans, Boneta says, First Amendment rights will lose their meaning.

“That’s why the internal investigation of my audit and others across the country is so necessary,” she told TheDC. “This is about all Americans. If it could happen to me, it could happen to anyone regardless of political beliefs. As an organic farmer, I believe property rights and economic freedom are issues for all Americans. Once our small family farms are gone, they are lost forever.”

Boneta’s FOIA documents show that Heather Richards — vice president of conservation and rural programs with the PEC — sent several letters and email messages addressed to county supervisors and zoning board officials that discussed the easement.

Email messages also show that Richards met with county officials to discuss the zoning issues impacting the Boneta farm. County officials wrote back to Richards confirming a meeting between her and Schwartz, to discuss the easement and the zoning changes.

Schwartz did not respond to multiple requests for comment. But Richards told TheDC that the PEC’s influence has been greatly overstated.

“To my knowledge the only letter on the zoning issue offers clarification about the easement and the litigation we have over it,” she said. “We were concerned at the time that the issue of our conservation easement and what we are enforcing over the terms of our easement were being conflated and confused with the zoning issue. I had a conversation with a variety of people at the time to clarify the difference between the easement and the zoning issues. And PEC’s concern is with the easement itself. We didn’t take a position on the zoning. ”

Since Boneta's audit did not come from the national IRS office, it is more likely a "computer kicked it out" for innocent reasons based on what was in or omitted from her tax return that is not related to any kind of coordinated effort, Richardson, the Clinton IRS official, said.

But she did express concern that county officials were aware of the audit before it officially arrived in the mail.

"Sometimes coincidences happen and people don't believe it, but they do," she said. "But I don't know why Peter Schwarz or anyone else in the county would be talking to the IRS."

Bonner Cohen, senior fellow with the National Center for Public Policy Research, does not buy into the idea that Boneta's audit was the result of happenstance.

"The cozy relationship between power-hungry Fauquier County officials and the well-funded PEC — both intent on bullying Martha Boneta — is symptomatic for the stacked deck so many Americans are facing," he said. "No sooner had she stood up to their intimidation, then she was slapped with an IRS audit. Pure coincidence, of course."

The Boneta Bill passed the Virginia House of Delegates in a 77-22 vote in February. The legislation was later blocked in the state's Senate Agriculture Committee in an 11-4 vote, but Republican Delegate Scott Lingamfelter has vowed to reintroduce the bill next year.

World News Daily

Now IRS targets veterans' group

Members of Congress call foul over demands for personal information

by Michael Volpe

The Internal Revenue Service, which has been caught harassing conservative organizations with demands for personal ideological details, such as the content of prayers, now is doing the same to veterans' groups.

Louis J. Celli Jr., director of the National Legislative Division at the American Legion, spoke exclusively with WND about the developing problem.

He said that officials at American Legion headquarters have been getting calls from a number of the group's outposts complaining of IRS agents who, during the course of their inspections, were demanding personal information.

The information, Celli said, includes birth dates and Social Security numbers of members.

Celli said one outpost in Texas, where officials were unable to comply immediately with the requirements, was fined \$12,000, or \$1,000 for each of 12 days it failed to produce the documents the IRS demanded.

Celli lamented that such actions mean the American Legion will have less money for many of the veteran-related programs it sponsors.

“It’s such a shame, because that money could go to fund projects for our wounded warriors,” he said.

The situation has become so egregious that it has attracted attention in Congress.

On Aug. 28, Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., fired off a letter to acting IRS Director Danny Werfel about the problem.

[In the letter](#), Miller expressed concern about a change in bureaucratic language in an IRS field manual that now encourages IRS agents to ask groups like the American Legion for a series of documents that include unnecessarily personal information.

“As you know, 501(c)19 of the Internal Revenue Code provides tax exempt status to certain veterans’ organizations. Under Field Determination Guidelines published on January 27, 2011, these organizations are now required to provide IRS auditors with materials including ‘membership applications, DD Forms 214, or other discharge documents’ or risk significant financial penalties.”

The 501(c)19 tax code is most commonly used by veterans’ assistance organizations like the American Legion, same way churches use the 501(c)3 designation.

Celli explained that the DD 214 forms were not only cumbersome to provide but full of personal information on each individual member. He also said that on occasion, the IRS demanded that the American Legion provide discharge documents even on members who are still on active duty, without any explanation.

Miller blasted this rule in a statement in which he condemned the actions of the IRS as unfairly targeting groups trying to help veterans.

“As if we needed more proof the IRS is completely out of control. After illegally targeting innocent groups solely on the basis of their political beliefs, the IRS now appears to have America’s veteran’s service organizations in the crosshairs,” he wrote.

“Congress has already provided for the tax exempt status of many veterans’ organizations in recognition of both the selfless service of their members and the important role VSOs play in honoring, remembering and assisting some of the most vulnerable and worthy among us – wounded warriors, disabled veterans, military families, and the widows, orphans, survivors, and dependents of the fallen. Allegations that VSOs are now being unfairly targeted by the very government they sought to protect and defend are nothing short of unacceptable to me.”

Lori Lowenthal-Marcus said her pro-Israel group, [Z Street](#), was subjected to similarly intrusive questions when that group applied for non-profit status.

She explained that after providing the IRS with a brief biography of each of her group’s board members, the IRS still demanded that she provide a formal resume of each of the board members without explaining what was missing in the biography already provided.

That dispute now is in court, with Z Street [arguing that the IRS violated the group’s due process rights](#) in the approval process.

Lowenthal-Marcus said that she believes that asking veteran's assistance groups for such personal information could only be explained by bureaucracy run amok.

"Someone (within the IRS) must have gotten the idea that large organizations like these make for a good place to try and scam," Lowenthal-Marcus said. "If that's true, how offensive is that?"

Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., also wrote Werfel, [demanding that the new rule be suspended](#) immediately while Congress has a chance to investigate the matter.

"At a minimum, I ask that the IRS cease carrying out this mandate until further review. We must be certain that the privacy of our nation's heroes is respected. Given the American public's increased frustration with the IRS and the failures of government bureaucracy at large, I am disappointed that such a policy targeting America's servicemen and women would be a priority for the IRS. We must never forget that our country has a responsibility to protect its veterans who have put their lives on the line to defend our freedoms, and they deserve our utmost respect."

The IRS has been the subject of intense scrutiny since it was revealed in May that it singled out conservative groups with "tea party" in their name for extra scrutiny. In those cases, IRS agents were instructed to pull any group with "tea party" in their name and perform a far more intense audit.

Multiple lawsuits have resulted from the IRS actions, and the Thomas More Society has said that several pro-life groups it represents allege IRS harassment. The legal group sent a [letter](#) to the House Ways and Means Committee complaining that several pro-life groups reported they were forced to answer intrusive questions such as "how often do you pray?"

The Blaze

[This Is What Happens When Citizens Get Fed Up Over Speed Cameras](#)

by Liz Klimas



This traffic camera, supposedly in Wicomico County, Maryland, was spray-painted over the lens and tagged with the year 1776, the year the U.S. declared its independence.

Citizens across the country have grumbled about speed cameras, but someone in Wicomico County, Maryland appears to be making a physical — and political — point.

A [photo posted on the blog SBY News](#) shows a traffic camera that's been spray-painted over the lens and tagged with the year 1776, the year the U.S. declared independence.

“Good for them!” blog publisher Joe Alberio wrote.

Some commenting on the post seem to agree. Here are a few:

- Everytime I drive past one, I secretly wish someone would do that. I would gladly donate to their bail if they get caught.
- I love it then the top it off 1776 nice touch
- Next, surveillance cameras for the surveillance cameras.

But others noted that this would be considered vandalism and disagreed with the destruction of the cameras, which take photos of license plates that get mailed with citations to offending drivers.

“Good for them? This is VANDALISM. Drive the speed limit and stop with the ‘patriot’ hogwash. This is criminal behavior, and it should be punished,” one commenter wrote.

According to WBOC-TV, [speed cameras in Wicomico County raked in \\$40,000](#) for the police department last year, funding computers, a K-9 unit and uniforms.

This isn't the only location in Maryland where speed cameras have come under attack. In Tacoma Park, a camera that issued more than [1,000 tickets in less than three months](#) was spray painted black last month, WJLA-TV reported.

“We hate them! And this camera taking a hundred dollars here and a hundred dollars there. Money coming out and not coming in! We are gonna feel it — everybody feels it!” David McKenzie of Hyattsville told the news station.

Here's the report on that incident:

Speed and red light cameras have spurred controversy all over the country, but Maryland specifically seems to have had some serious issues with them.

Last year, a lawmaker in the state suggested that if drivers could be fined for breaking the law, the [speed camera company should be fined](#) as well when it issues “bogus” tickets. At the time, at least five of Baltimore County's 83 cameras were found to have problems.

In Charles County, [nearly 3,400 drivers who paid traffic tickets](#) because of the cameras that were later deemed illegal are now being issued refunds.

The city of Westminster [ended up canceling its camera program](#) after it found operating the system was costing the taxpayers money, not even breaking even.

TheBlaze reported in the past about a [Florida judge who ruled red light cameras unconstitutional](#) and an [Ohio judge who did the same](#) against a village's speed cameras.



Immunity



Ms Lerner, why do you need immunity if you did nothing illegal? *



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May 5, 2013

You've grown up hearing voices that incessantly warn of government as nothing more than some separate, sinister entity that's at the root of all our problems... They'll warn that tyranny is always lurking just around the corner. You should reject these voices,



One week later



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**ACTUALLY I AM
PRETTY SURE**

**THIS IS THE DROID
I'M LOOKING FOR**

