

Members of Congress, Attorney General Horne, Representatives, and guests:

Thank you for hosting this hearing; I'm Chris Rossiter, President of the Greater Phoenix Tea Party

Seated with me today is Arizona State Representative and Greater Phoenix Tea Party co-founder, Kelly Townsend.

Our organization was founded as an Arizona non-member/non-profit corporation by Kelly Townsend and Les White in late 2009. At the end of our first full year we filed our 501c4 application with the IRS. In January of 2011, the US Treasury cashed our application check. Months went by with no word from the IRS so we tracked down and queried the agent in charge of our file. No compelling reasons were offered for the delay and it seemed we were always assured in subsequent calls to them that it shouldn't be much longer.

In February of 2012, we got one of the infamous IRS letters requesting inapposite information. When several other Tea Party groups across the country got their letters simultaneously, we knew something was up. We gratefully accepted legal counsel from the American Center for Law and Justice and they represent our organization in matters with the IRS. They submitted our responses to the IRS, answering only those questions they deemed constitutional and challenging the ones they felt were not. We still have not received approval or denial of our 501c4 application.

In May of this year, the IRS declared that they had indeed been targeting Tea Party and conservative groups leading up to the 2012 election cycle. Initial claims that low-level field agents took the initiative to target our groups have been shown to be lies. Ms. Lerner declared when this scandal came to light, that upon discovering the targeting of conservative groups, she ordered a halt to the practice immediately; yet here we are along with several other groups having not been approved or denied. Earlier this August, Representative Camp revealed that an IRS agent told him 3 months after this scandal broke that the IRS continues to target Tea Party groups. In essence, when the IRS initially came forward, their statement should have been, "we were wrong, we're sorry, but we're gonna keep doing it."

This harassing of ideological adversaries has vindicated the very founding of the Tea Party movement and has given all of our warnings to the American people credence regarding the dangers of big government. Because of their un-constitutional treatment we have filed suit against the IRS.

Today we are here to urge Congress to act relentlessly to expose this very real scandal and administer justice. We do have concerns about follow through based on what we've seen so far:

- Instead of being fired, Ms. Lerner has been rewarded and promoted to lead the IRS division charged with implementing Obamacare.
- A letter sent by 12 US Senators in early 2012 demanding answers from the IRS was ignored by the agency and no concern was expressed by those Senators at the dismissal of their inquiry, nor did any follow up take place of which we are aware.
- And of course the applications of several groups are still pending indicating that the targeting continues despite all of the national scrutiny this issue has received.

Sending a letter or holding hearings to appease constituents will not suffice; justice must be served.

The IRS flagged the applications of groups who listed as part of their organizing purpose "teaching the US Constitution" and those with the word "patriot" in their name. This discriminatory policy is not limited to the IRS; it is indicative of a broader set of Administration directives. A 2009 Homeland Security memo contained watch words for potential domestic terrorists. This included, "Those concerned over the economy; loss of jobs; foreclosures; antagonism toward the Obama Administration; oppose illegal immigration; oppose loss of US prestige, or those who fear communism." Take note—that only a Communist would be threatened by someone who fears Communism. This document reads like a political opposition harassment list—not a memo from a credible law enforcement agency. It makes suspects out of all patriotic Americans.

The Constitution is the supreme law of the land; it restrains government not citizens. Our country isn't in trouble today because it's outdated; we're in trouble because it's not being followed. What does it say about an administration that directs its agencies to harass those who teach and abide by the Constitution? If they don't respect the law, don't enforce the law, and don't abide by the law, are they not themselves criminals? Who is going to stand up and restrain them or will it be left ultimately to the American people when their long-suffering can endure no more? In the meantime, Americans are asking; when did we grant an agency comprised of public servants the power to terrorize our citizens and abridge our rights? Wasn't the Constitution designed specifically to prevent such things?

If only to satisfy curiosity, there is a famous question from Watergate we'd like answered; "What did the President know and when did he know it?" What was discussed at the Whitehouse during Mr. Schuler's 120 odd visits there coinciding with the targeting period? IRS Chief Counsel, Mr. Wilkins met with President Obama in the Roosevelt Room on April 23, 2012. Two days later, Mr. Wilkins' office sent the exempt organizations determination unit additional draft guidance for approving or denying Tea Party tax exempt status.

It is apparent that activists within our bureaucratic system have become masters at insulating themselves from traditional oversight. We implore you to be relentless in your investigation and administration of justice; be mindful of your oaths; turn Washington back to the people. Do this, and all Americans will benefit from your actions, and we will stand beside you and help develop the tools necessary to fight domestic enemies and tyranny. As long as the Federal government continues to expand beyond its delegated bounds and threatens individual liberty, America's standing will continue to shrink and we will accelerate towards an unnecessary national sunset.

In his inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson said regarding divergence from our founding principles, "...should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety."

May God deliver us from evil within and without and may He continue to bless our great land!

Thank you!

Chris Rossiter; President of the Greater Phoenix Tea Party

On behalf of the Board of the Greater Phoenix Tea Party