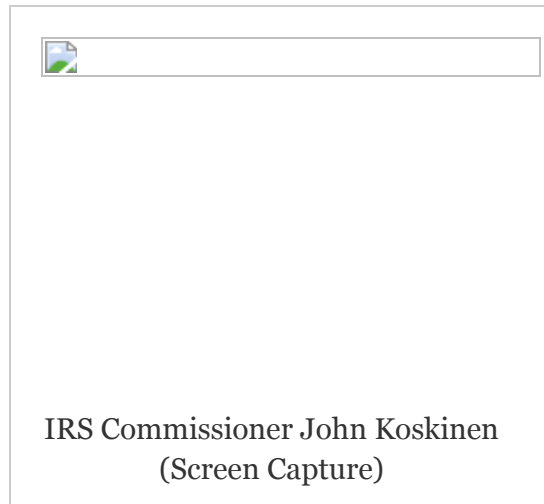


Inspector General: IRS Employees Found ‘Harassing or Abusing Taxpayers’

By [CNSNews.com Staff](#) | December 20, 2017 | 12:38 PM EST

(CNSNews.com) - The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, which oversees the Internal Revenue Service, [reports that](#) in fiscal 2016 the IRS closed four cases in which IRS employees were found to have violated a law governing their behavior toward taxpayers and that these violations included “harassing and abusing taxpayers and using obscene and profane language.”



In 1998, Congress enacted a law imposing restrictions on the way that IRS employees could treat taxpayers.

As explained by the IG, this included a prohibition on an IRS employee contacting a taxpayer at “unusual or inconvenient times,” contacting the taxpayer directly if the taxpayer “has obtained representation from a person authorized to practice before the IRS,” or contacting the taxpayer at the “taxpayers place of employment, if the IRS knows or has reason to know that such communication is prohibited.”

Also, the IG said, “the IRS may not harass, oppress, or abuse any person in connection with any tax collection activity.”

This includes, among other things, a prohibition on the “use or threat of violence or harm,” “use of obscene or profane language,” “causing a phone to ring continuously with harassing intent,” and “placing of

telephone calls without meaningful disclosure of the caller's identity.”

The IG summarized the four cases involving IRS employees that the IRS closed in fiscal 2016.

“Two revenue officers contacted taxpayers directly without the required consent of the taxpayers’ power of attorney, one contact representative harassed or abused taxpayers, and one contact representative used obscene or profane language with taxpayers,” [said the IG report, which was produced on Sept. 28, 2017.](#)

“Administrative actions were taken by the IRS to address these violations: one revenue officer resigned in lieu of termination, one revenue officer received a 10-day suspension, one contact representative received a 10-day suspension, and one contact representative was admonished,” said the report.

The IG report also said the IRS lost track of 14 complaints of IRS employee misconduct that the IG had referred to the federal tax collection agency.

“In addition, during Fiscal Year 2016, the TIGTA Office of Investigations referred 14 complaints to the IRS that were not entered into the IRS tracking system or reviewed to determine if they were violations of the FTCP,” said the report.

“During FY 2016, the TIGTA Office of Investigations referred 14 complaints to the IRS that were not entered into the ALERTS and were not reviewed to determine if they were violations of the FTCP,” the IG report elaborated. “This issue was also identified in a prior audit, and the IRS had begun taking corrective action by working with TIGTA Office of Investigations to revise TIGTA Form 2070, Complaint Referral Memorandum.

“The revised form would allow the TIGTA Office of Investigations to more clearly identify potential FTCP violations when e-mailing complaints to the IRS,” said the report. “However, corrective actions were not completed before these 14 cases were processed.

“After we informed the IRS of the 14 cases, it located six but could not locate eight of the 14 complaints in any of its records. As a result,

the IRS began working on a new computer SharePoint site to control complaints from the TIGTA Office of Investigations before they are added to the ALERTS.”

The inspector general concluded that abusing taxpayers “reflects poorly on the IRS.”

“The abuse and harassment of taxpayers by IRS employees while attempting to collect taxes reflects poorly on the IRS and can have a negative impact on voluntary compliance,” said the report. “It is important that taxpayers receive fair and balanced treatment from IRS employees when they attempt to collect taxes.”