United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6200

September 2, 2026

The Honorable Scott Bessent
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220

Mr. Frank J. Bisignano
Chief Executive Officer
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20224

Dear Secretary Bessent and Mr. Bisignano:

We write regarding disturbing reports that senior Treasury officials are developing plans to target left-leaning tax-exempt organizations with IRS enforcement scrutiny and potentially revoke their tax-exempt status. These reports suggest that political considerations—including the timing of the 2026 midterm elections—are influencing that effort.

The New York Post reported on August 27, 2026, that Treasury officials are reviewing tax-exempt organizations' tax-exempt status, including the Open Society Foundations, Southern Poverty Law Center, Council on American-Islamic Relations, and other left-leaning "anti-corporate" and labor-aligned organizations.[1] It reported that members of Secretary Bessent's "inner circle" are developing a "blueprint" for possible revocations of these organizations' tax-exempt status, and that Administration officials want to complete "a good chunk of the crackdown" before the midterm elections.[2]

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[1] https://nypost.com/2026/08/27/business/trump-admin-set-to-target-george-soros-nonprofit-in-tax-crackdown/

[2] The reported targeting is particularly striking given Secretary Bessent's longstanding relationship with George Soros. Bessent spent years at Soros Fund Management, including as its Chief Investment Officer. Given Soros Fund Management's relationship with the Open Society Foundations, Treasury should explain any ethics review, recusal determination, or other safeguards governing Secretary Bessent's participation in matters involving the organization.

Following the 2013 controversy regarding the IRS's treatment of conservative organizations' applications for tax exemption, the Senate Finance Committee conducted a two-year bipartisan investigation.[3] Republican leaders repeatedly argued that tax administration must never be influenced by political bias or viewpoint. That principle should apply equally regardless of the political views of the organizations involved.

If accurate, the New York Post report raises serious questions about whether political officials are influencing IRS decisions concerning particular taxpayers in ways prohibited by federal law.

Section 7217 of the Internal Revenue Code makes it unlawful for senior Executive Branch officials to "request, directly or indirectly," that the IRS conduct or terminate "an audit or other investigation of any particular taxpayer with respect to the tax liability of such taxpayer." IRS employees who receive prohibited requests must report them to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA). A willful violation is punishable by a fine, imprisonment for up to five years, or both.

The New York Post's reporting fits a wider pattern of the Trump administration actively using national security directives to weaponize the IRS against protected First Amendment speech. In September 2025, President Trump issued National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 (NSPM-7) and an Executive Order directing the IRS and federal agencies to target the financial networks of "Antifa" and domestic terrorists.[4]

However, rather than targeting actual violence, these directives explicitly conflate terrorism with subjective political viewpoints—such as "anti-capitalism," "anti-Christianity," and views on race, migration, and gender.

Former Attorney General Bondi made this explicit in her December 4, 2025 memorandum, which ordered law enforcement to map the financial sponsors of "Antifa-aligned extremists," and pursue applicable tax crimes based on those same ideological viewpoints.[5] Consequently, IRS Criminal Investigation is now actively working with the FBI to scrutinize nonprofits in response to these partisan directives.[6]

The reported "blueprint" targeting left-leaning nonprofits is consistent with the Trump Administration's campaign against higher education. In the spring of 2025, Trump said "Perhaps Harvard should lose its Tax Exempt Status and be Taxed as a Political Entity if it keeps pushing political, ideological, and terrorist inspired/supporting 'Sickness?"[7] He also said he is

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[3] https://www.finance.senate.gov/release/finance-committee-releases-bipartisan-irs-report

[4] https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/

[5] https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/media/publications/Bondi_Memo_On_Countering_Domestic_Terrorism_And_Organized_Political_Violence.pdf

[6] https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fbi-irs-investigate-nonprofits-domestic-terrorism-links/

[7] https://www.wyden.senate.gov/news/press-releases/wyden-demands-investigation-into-trump-administrations-potential-criminal-activity-against-harvard-university

targeting Harvard because he disapproves of its diversity and inclusion admissions programs and claims it has not sufficiently addressed antisemitism on campus.[8]

In contrast to NSPM-7, the Bondi memo, and Trump's statements on social media, section 501(c)(3) and longstanding IRS authorities establish the objective standards for non-profit organizations to receive tax-exempt status. While unlawful activity may jeopardize exemption,[9] these authorities do not authorize the government to withdraw tax exemption because it disfavors an organization's views. Indeed, earlier this year, CEO Bisignano testified before the Senate Finance Committee that IRS has “never” acted on the President’s various statements criticizing his political opponents and that they have “no influence” on the IRS.[10]

IRS procedures similarly require impartial and consistent examination selection and independent classification review.[11] IRS examiners must evaluate evidence impartially and determine exempt status “strictly on the laws that govern qualification.”[12] Whether an organization complies with section 501(c)(3) cannot properly depend on whether enforcement can be completed before Election Day.

Finally, auditing specific taxpayers is the IRS’s responsibility, <u>not</u> the responsibility of political officials at Treasury.[13] If Treasury officials have accessed taxpayer-specific tax return information, including audit files or internal enforcement information, they may have violated section 6103, which permits access to protected taxpayer information <u>only when required</u> for an employee’s tax-administration duties.

Please provide the following information and documents by <u>September 15, 2026</u>:

1. Provide the reported “blueprint,” including all policies, directives, guidance, criteria, and other documents concerning Treasury and IRS implementation of NSPM-7 as it relates to tax-exempt organizations, including criteria for selecting organizations for examination or possible revocation.

2. Identify the Treasury, IRS, White House, and other Executive Branch officials who developed those policies or criteria or recommended particular tax-exempt organizations for review.

3. State whether Treasury, the White House, or another Executive Branch office has identified or recommended particular organizations—including any of those named in the Post report—for IRS examination, investigation, compliance review, or revocation. If so, identify the recommending office and the legal authority and criteria relied upon, without disclosing protected return information.

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[8] https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/02/us/politics/trump-harvard-tax-exempt-status.html

[9] See Rev. Rul. 75-384; Rev. Rul. 80-278; *Bob Jones University v. United States*, 461 U.S. 574 (1983).

[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuxXzeYI5S8

[11] See IRM 1.2.1.5, Policy Statement 4-119; IRM 4.70.6.

[12] IRM 4.70.13.

[13] See IRC § 7803(a)(2); Treasury Order 150-10 (1982).

4. State whether Secretary Bessent, any Treasury political appointee, any White House employee, or any other person covered by section 7217 has communicated directly or indirectly with IRS personnel about an audit or investigation of a particular taxpayer. If so, state whether any IRS employee made a report to TIGTA under section 7217(b). Provide any written request by Secretary Bessent that Treasury contends falls within the exception in section 7217(c)(3)for requests made "as a consequence of the implementation of a change in tax policy" and identify the change in tax policy that Treasury contends gave rise to the request.

5. State whether any Executive Branch official has asked IRS personnel to accelerate, prioritize, complete, or take enforcement action concerning particular tax-exempt organizations before the November 2026 elections.

6. State whether political affiliation, ideological viewpoint, electoral timing, classifications such as "Antifa-aligned," or any of the ideological concepts identified in NSPM-7 have been used, formally or informally, to identify organizations for IRS scrutiny. If so, identify the statutory or regulatory authority and objective criteria supporting their use.

7. Explain the legal and evidentiary standards Treasury and IRS are applying to determine when a tax-exempt organization has "directly or indirectly" financed political violence or domestic terrorism (as stated in NSPM-7), including the required nexus, knowledge, intent, materiality, and substantiality, and identify the relevant statutes, regulations, published guidance, and judicial decisions.

8. Describe the safeguards in place to ensure that referrals resulting from NSPM-7 are subject to the IRS's ordinary classification and examination-selection procedures and state whether any official outside the IRS can direct examination of an organization over the objection of career IRS personnel.

9. State whether the President or White House personnel have requested or received return information concerning tax-exempt organizations in connection with this initiative and, if so, whether the requirements of section 6103(g), including applicable reporting and recordkeeping requirements, were satisfied.

10. Given Secretary Bessent's prior senior roles at Soros Fund Management and Soros Fund Management's relationship with the Open Society Foundations, describe any ethics review, recusal determination, waiver, screening arrangement, or other measure addressing Secretary Bessent's participation in matters involving the Open Society Foundations.

Please also preserve all potentially responsive records, including emails, text and encrypted-message communications, memoranda, notes, calendar entries, meeting materials, and draft documents.

Americans of every political persuasion must be able to trust that the IRS applies the tax code objectively under one set of rules. Organizations that violate section 501(c)(3) should face appropriate enforcement regardless of their politics—and organizations should never face IRS scrutiny because political officials disapprove of their views.

We expect your prompt cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance

Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

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