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ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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Opening Statement Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

Hearing on “Examining the IRS’s Role in Implementing and Enforcing ObamaCare”

October 9, 2013

Today, our nation is entering its ninth day of [House Speaker John Boehner’s government shutdown](#). Speaker Boehner has refused to allow the House to vote on a clean Continuing Resolution that would end this shutdown—even though it would pass with a bipartisan majority. Instead, he is allowing a small group of Republican extremists to pursue their ideological crusade to repeal the Affordable Care Act and put insurance companies back in charge of healthcare decisions for millions of Americans.

Even worse, our country is rapidly approaching the debt ceiling deadline of October 17, yet Republicans seem willing to jeopardize the full faith and credit of the United States unless we eliminate the ACA, even though it is the law of the land and has been upheld by the Supreme Court. House Republicans have voted more than 40 times to repeal the ACA, so although today’s hearing may be cloaked in rhetoric about improving the law, nobody truly believes Republicans want that to happen.

Instead, today’s hearing is an obvious attempt to link two issues that have nothing to do with each other: the implementation of the ACA and the so-called IRS Tea Party scandal. For nearly a year, Republicans have been railing against today’s hearing witness, Sarah Hall Ingram, for being the supposed mastermind behind the IRS targeting of Tea Party groups, and for being some sort of political operative who is now in charge of implementing ObamaCare.

One of our Committee Members, Congressman Jordan, said Ms. Ingram [“headed up this scandal.”](#) He said: [“I can’t wait until we get her in front of the committee.”](#) Congressman Tim Griffin accused Ms. Ingram of being [“directly” in charge of IRS “targeting.”](#) He said: “she provided horrendous customer service under her watch, and now she’s gonna do the same implementing ObamaCare.” Another Member of our Committee, Congressman Meadows, [criticized the bonuses](#) Ms. Ingram received. And Congressman Tom Price argued that her [“employment at the IRS should be suspended.”](#)

The problem with these accusations is that they are 100% wrong. After hearing directly from more than 30 witnesses and reviewing thousands of pages of documents, our Committee has obtained absolutely [no evidence whatsoever](#) that Ms. Ingram was involved in any way with developing or directing the use of inappropriate criteria to screen Tea Party groups or any other groups applying for tax-exempt status.

In fact, we found just the opposite. Ms. Ingram left her position as Commissioner of the Tax-Exempt Government Entities Division in December 2010—[six months before](#) her former subordinates became aware of inappropriate criteria used to screen applicants for tax-exempt status. Russell George, the Inspector General of the IRS, stated that Lois Lerner did not learn about the inappropriate criteria until June 2011—six months [after](#) Ms. Ingram left for her new position implementing the ACA.

There is another problem with these ruthless Republican allegations. Ms. Ingram is not a political operative. She is a dedicated public servant who has excelled under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

In 2004, President George W. Bush awarded Ms. Ingram the nation's highest civil service award—the Distinguished Executive Presidential Rank Award—for her “outstanding tax law leadership” and her “highly effective” efforts to combat terrorism financing. And although you won't hear this from my Republican colleagues, after President Bush gave her that award, Ms. Ingram also received a bonus in recognition of her exemplary work. That bonus was larger than any she received during the Obama Administration.

Dragging Ms. Ingram through the mud and impugning her reputation as part of a broader Republican campaign against the ACA is the worst kind of politics. It is intellectually dishonest, and it is unfair to this highly regarded public servant.

October 1 was a historic day for our country, not because Speaker Boehner shut down the government, but because it was the first day millions of Americans could sign up for health insurance. In the first two days alone, seven million Americans visited healthcare.gov, which dwarfs the highest web traffic ever experienced on Medicare's website. Although there will continue to be challenges implementing this law, I want to thank Ms. Ingram for her service—under both Democratic and Republican administrations—and for her work on the ACA, which by all accounts is outstanding.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to place a document into the record. Since today's hearing was supposed to be about IRS implementation of the ACA, [I asked you last week](#) to invite officials from [all four IRS offices in charge of this program](#). On Monday, you refused. So I asked these officials to attend today, along with IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel, in case Committee Members had questions outside the scope of Ms. Ingram's responsibilities.

Last night, I received a [letter](#) from Mr. Werfel stating that you personally told him that he and these other IRS officials were not welcome—that essentially they were banned from the hearing room. I have seen a lot of things as a Member of Congress, but I have never seen a

Committee Chairman tell the head of an agency that he could not be present during a public hearing with one of his own employees. I think Mr. Werfel's letter says volumes about today's hearing, and I ask unanimous consent that it be entered into the record.