

PREPARED WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF

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Founder and President, Wetumpka TEA Party, Inc.

**Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Job Creation & Regulatory Affairs**

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

February 6, 2014

**“The IRS Targeting of Wetumpka TEA Party, Inc.”**

Hello. Thank you for inviting me to speak. For anyone who knows me, it is not hard to tell that I deeply love this country and the freedom and liberty it symbolizes. The fact that I find myself sitting before you is quite miraculous, but not at all by accident! Unfortunately, I’m not here to carry a message of joy or thanksgiving; I am here in absolute grief for my beloved country.

I appreciate you holding hearings about the IRS and I intend to fully cooperate with you. I mean this with the utmost respect, but I must ask, are some members of Congress taking this targeting of Americans seriously? It is very disturbing for some in Congress and many in the Obama Administration to admit last year that what they did was wrong, argue for an investigation to take place to hold those responsible accountable, and then suggest months later that nothing ever happened and that this was all just a phony scandal. Eight months ago, I along with five other victims of this targeting eloquently laid out our cases before another committee in congress. We spoke in detail of the IRS abuses, Congress held hearings, our attorneys filed a lawsuit, the President said that he was outraged, members of both parties said that this was unacceptable, Attorney General Holder ordered a FBI criminal investigation of the IRS, and now 8 months have gone by, no one has been prosecuted, some members of Congress are calling this a phony scandal, and the President of the United States just told all of America before the Super Bowl this past weekend that not one “smidgen” of corruption ever took place. It appears that he has already made up his mind on the matter, before any real investigation has taken place, before Congress has had their final word in oversight authority, and before my case, along with 40 other groups has had their day in court.

At the last hearing when I testified, we learned the details about the IRS leaking confidential donor information to opposition groups. If true, this is a felony! We also learned of serious Constitutional

violations of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights of many Americans. We learned of multiple violations of the Administrative Procedure Act as well as violations of the Internal Revenue Code.

Government employees don't just go rouge en masse; their orders had to originate somewhere. The original story was that there were just a couple of rogue agents who were confused in a little office in Cincinnati who caused this problem. Everyone knows that this was a lie. There were offices across the country involved with this targeting scheme including members of the US Treasury Department headquarters in Washington, DC.

Even with all of these known violations of law, no one has been officially charged in a criminal investigation, no one has been shamed, fired, arrested, or brought to justice. Lois Lerner took the fifth, left a Congressional hearing room, and then retired with full government benefits.

Since my last testimony before Congress, the FBI has not contacted me. When former FBI Director Muller admitted, in front of the House Judiciary Committee, that he did not know of anyone who was involved in the investigation – why was he not personally held to account?

Why has the Attorney General said that a criminal investigation is ongoing, but someone at the FBI leaked to the *Wall Street Journal* that no one would be charged with a crime? Why has the IRS admitted to the targeting of hundreds of groups who were later discovered to be on an internal BOLO “hit list”, and then the IRS was later allowed to unilaterally propose a re-writing of 501c4 rules to permanently achieve the goal of their targeting? Rules, which will in effect, shut down forever the subjects of their targeting scheme.

I am here at your invitation and I am grateful, but I will tell you what I, as a citizen, along with millions standing beside me, want from you—we want, NO, we demand accountability!

What started off as clearly a partisan scheme to silence TEA Party and other conservative organizations has now become a rallying cry for some to publicly request that the IRS double down and finish off their prey. I am an American. I am offended that a member of the United States Senate would continually request that the IRS go after Americans like me because they do not agree with my values.

It appears that many in Washington, DC are threatened by regular citizens who believe in limiting government. So maybe you can understand why I, and millions of my fellow Americans are losing faith in many of those in Congress. We want to know how this ends. We want to know if someone will

really get to the bottom of this scandal. Not one member of Congress should ever declare war on some Americans because they do not respect their Constitutional rights and viewpoints and are unwilling to accept a United States Supreme Court ruling protecting those rights. Again, “I am telling many in my government that you have completely forgotten your place!”

In my previous testimony, I explained that our application was complete and accurate and we clearly qualified for a 501c4 tax-exempt status, yet that didn’t stop the IRS from demanding information they were not entitled to; unconstitutional requests that violated their own rules. The information that they demanded we give them had nothing to do with the status we were seeking. Why must the IRS know who came to our meetings? Why did they need to have copies of every speech ever given and the credentials of our speakers? Why did they need to know who our donors were? None of this was their business.

Why in America is it now considered a threat to our government to study our founding documents and to advocate for limited government and responsible spending? Why is giving out copies of the constitution and discussing pending legislation or even comparing legislative score cards a threat to the current Administration and members of Congress? Are certain members of Congress threatened by this type of civic engagement?

The IRS’s targeting of the Wetumpka TEA Party is disturbing and the activist partisan aggression coming from the IRS deeply unnerved me. The IRS, EPA, or any other government agency should never be used as a weapon against an Administration’s political enemies. For the first time in my memory of American history – the federal government targeted, harassed, and sought to stifle millions of citizens solely because of their point of view. And it wasn’t subtle.

The governments of third world nations intimidate and harass dissenting citizens. It does NOT happen in the land of the free... and it will not be tolerated.

It’s shocking. It’s repugnant. It’s infuriating. And – most troubling of all – those responsible have not stopped it! Some of the targeted groups are still waiting for approval. The IRS tried to intimidate us with their intrusive and illegal questionnaires but we hired the American Center for Law and Justice. They now represent us in court against the IRS and this Administration. With such a line drawn in the sand, you would think that the IRS would retreat. They have not done so however, with their newly proposed regulations.

Activity that has always been allowed for 501c4's and that is vital to the social welfare of our communities will now be considered "Campaign Related Political Activity" and will jeopardize the tax-exempt status of thousands of groups. **Let me give you some examples of the proposed rule changes:**

- We're not allowed to use words like "oppose," "vote," "support," "defeat," and "reject."
- We are not allowed to mention, on our website, or in any communication that would reach 500 people or more, the name of a candidate for office, 30 days before a primary election and 60 days before a general election.
- We're not allowed to mention the name of a political party if they have a candidate running for office 60 days before a general election,
- No more voter registration drives or conducting a non-partisan "get-out-the-vote" drives.
- No creating or distributing voter guides outlining how incumbents voted on particular bills.
- We can't host candidates for office at any event, including debates or forums up for 2 months before the general election,
- Our officers and leaders cannot speak publicly about incumbents, legislation, and/or voting records without it jeopardizing our tax status.

These proposed changes are not going to impact all Americans equally. The IRS has made sure that the labor unions and trade associations are wholly exempt from these new rules. Does this sound like the land of the free or the home of the brave to you? Where does the buck stop?

Whatever your political affiliation, most Americans can agree – and history will attest – that unaddressed abuses of power lead to greater abuses of power.

The political targeting carried out by the IRS is a fundamental transformation of *the* America that we all grew up in. I am a Born Free American Woman, and we are Born Free Americans, and our liberties are at dire risk, and all of it has happened on this Administration's watch and during their control. Our government is using its agencies as weapons against its own citizens and we demand that Congress and the Courts fulfill their duty to stop these abuses immediately and to bring to justice not only those who gave the orders but all those who helped carry them out.

Thank you, I will take any questions you might have.

## **Biography**

Becky Gerritson grew up in Glenwood Springs, CO. She received her B.A. in Elementary Education from the University of Northern Colorado. Becky is the Co-Founder and President of the Wetumpka TEA Party (WTP) in Alabama. She has been a leader in bringing numerous Alabama TEA Parties and other Patriot groups together to combat abuses of state and federal government overreach.

She is an active member of the Stop Common Core Task Force in Alabama and also works to promote Parental Rights in America. Since June 2013, she has garnered national attention after delivering her impassioned Congressional testimony about IRS abuses of the WTP.

In December 2013, Gerritson joined the True the Vote team as their National Field Trainer. Becky is married to her best friend, Eric Gerritson, who is retired from the Air Force and currently works for the State of Alabama Military Department in Montgomery, AL. They have an amazing daughter, Shelley, whom they homeschooled and is currently attending Summit International School of Ministry in Pennsylvania.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"  
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)(5)

Name:

Rebecca Gerritsen

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2011. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

N/A

2. Please list any entity you are testifying on behalf of and briefly describe your relationship with these entities.

Wetumpka TEA Party Inc. I am the founder + president.

3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received since October 1, 2010, by the entity(ies) you listed above. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

N/A

I certify that the above information is true and correct.

Signature:

Rebecca Gerritsen

Date:

2/3/14