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House Republicans Vow To Immediately Repeal Funding For 87,000 IRS Agents

NOVEMBER 18, 2022 • TRACEY LONGO

As Republicans take control of the House, they are vowing that one of their first initiatives will be to put President Biden’s so-called 87,000 new IRS agents’ jobs on the chopping block.

“On day one, in this House, we will repeal 87,000 IRS agents,” Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy told reporters on Thursday. “We will use the power of the purse – the size of our debt has to stop.” McCarthy won his party’s nomination to be Speaker of the House in January.

Republicans’ goal would be to roll back some or all of the \$80 billion in funding over 10 years Congress passed in the Inflation Reduction Act. The IRS, which claims it has been stymied with budgetary constraints for years, has vowed to use the funds to collect some estimated \$5 trillion in back taxes and to clear its massive unprocessed tax return backlog.

A number of GOP congressman across Twitter are echoing Leader McCarthy’s vow.

“Our first acts as a @HouseGOP Majority will be to pass legislation to REPEAL Joe Biden’s plan to double the IRS with 87,000 more agents. We must also demand @POTUS SECURE our border. Instead of IRS agents, let’s hire more Border Agents to defeat cartels and get the job done!” New York Rep. Nicole Malliotakis tweeted on Tuesday.

While Republicans in the House may indeed introduce such a plan, the likelihood it would pass is questionable, given some pretty formidable roadblocks, long-time public policy expert Marcia Wagner said. Even if Republicans fail to cut the IRS’s budget, the battle could set the stage for for two years of contentious battle over funding the government.

Wagner said GOP House leadership’s rhetoric “is really good red meat for the base they’ll use at the beginning of their takeover, but if you dig down the Senate won’t pass a repeal [of IRS funding] and Biden can always veto it,” the founder and principal of Boston-based Wagner Law firm said.

“The margin in the House is just so slim for Republicans and I have the feeling that there are moderates who would not go along with it anyway, so I don’t think Republicans will have nearly the uniform voting block they hope for,” she said.

According to Wagner, Congress’s time would be better spent updating the tax code to encourage retirement savings. “The last time the tax code was overhauled was 1986 under President Reagan. We didn’t even have crypto or internet back then,” Wagner added.

To lead the battle at the IRS, on November 10 President Biden nominated Danny Werfel, who heads Boston Consulting Group’s global public sector practice, to be IRS Commissioner. Werfel would replace President Trump’s IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig.

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If confirmed by the Senate, Werfel will be tasked with planning how to spend the funding infusion of nearly \$80 billion over the next 10 years.

The new IRS commissioner will also be tasked with digging out of what is arguably the worst back log in unprocessed tax returns the IRS has ever amassed. The agency admitted last week the backlog has hit the 8 million mark, surpassing the record-breaking 7 million in unprocessed returns it had in its inventory at the same time last year, according to National Taxpayer Advocate Erin Collins.

Part of Werfel's job, no doubt, will be countering Republicans' rhetoric regarding the so-called 87,000 agents the IRS has never confirmed it is hiring, especially since lawmakers claim they will be targeting all taxpayers, including the middle class.

That rhetoric is unlikely to die down any time soon. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) tweeted on Wednesday: "We need to fight back against Biden's army of 87,000 new IRS agents who are being hired to harass and persecute Americans...These are fights worth having!"

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