

OPENING STATEMENT  
**Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Research and Technology  
*“Can the IRS Protect Taxpayers’ Personal Information?”*  
April 14, 2016

I want to begin by welcoming the witnesses to today’s hearing to discuss the need for stronger information security policies and procedures at the Internal Revenue Service in order to better protect taxpayers’ personal information.

I am concerned about the identify theft that has already occurred and might yet occur because of weakness in information security controls at the IRS. Taxpayers have a right to expect that their information will be kept secure when they make use of online services provided by the Internal Revenue Service or any other government agency.

Congressional oversight of these matters is important. I expect that the many IRS hearings being held across Congress this week and next will help improve decision making for information security at the agency. However, I hope that these hearings will also help my colleagues improve Congressional decision making about funding for the Internal Revenue Service.

The Internal Revenue Service’s budget has been cut by 17 percent since 2010, after adjusting for inflation, despite a 7 percent increase in the number of tax returns required to be processed, and despite new requirements under the Affordable Care Act and the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act. These spending cuts, which triggered a 14 percent reduction in IRS employees, are a significant factor in weakened taxpayer services, reduced detection and enforcement of fraudulent claims, and the agency’s ability to hire qualified staff needed to fulfill its many requirements under the Federal Information Security and Management Act. And if the House had its way in recent years, the agency’s budget would have been cut even further.

So let us be critical of some of the management decisions made at the Internal Revenue Service with respect to protecting taxpayers’ personal information. And let us be sure they are putting the people, systems, and processes in place to make better decisions going forward. But let us also be willing to provide the agency with the financial resources and other authorities they need to accomplish these goals.

Finally, cybersecurity is a big challenge that requires effective action by many people and offices at the Office of Management and Budget, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Department of Homeland Security, the individual implementing agency, such as the Internal Revenue Service, and their private sector partners. When agencies make poor decisions, we should hold them accountable. However, effective oversight will require more than just a hearing and a press release. If we are serious, this Committee will need to do the hard work of thinking

about better, smarter, more effective federal policies to help the agencies meet their information security goals and requirements.

Again, thank you to the witnesses for being here this morning, and I yield back.