

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

April 3, 2019

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin,

I am writing in reference to a request you received from Chairman Neal for the President's tax returns. This is the latest effort from House Democrats in their misguided rush to impeach President Trump that began the day after the 2016 election.

This particular request is an abuse of the tax-writing committees' statutory authority, and violates the intent and safeguards of Section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code as Congress intended.

Weaponizing our nation's tax code by targeting political foes sets a dangerous precedent and weakens Americans privacy right. As you know, all Americans have a fundamental right to the privacy of the personal information found in their tax returns.

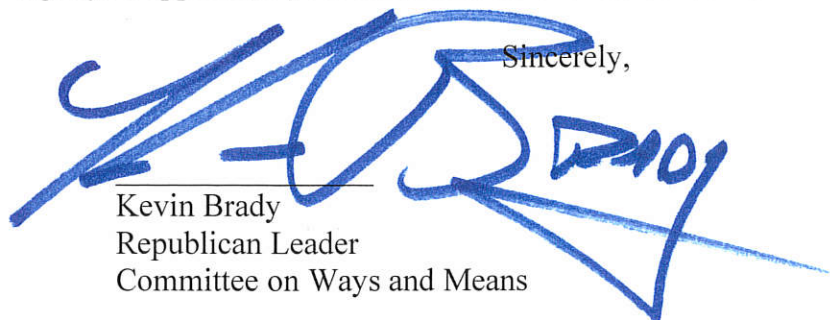
The use of the committee's authority to access and make public the tax returns of a single individual for purely political purposes would not only set a dangerous precedent, but it also undermines the core intent of the law. In 1976, Congress responded to widespread concerns about the abuse of tax information by government agencies for purposes other than tax administration, including partisan political purposes, by codifying the privacy protections we have in place today.

While some Members of Congress would like additional financial information made public without taxpayer consent, such a violation of privacy would be reckless. When Congress violates the rights of one taxpayer for political purposes, it begins the process of eroding and threatening the privacy rights of all taxpayers. This is a risk that we cannot and should not take.

Transparency in our government is enormously important, but so is privacy and freedom from the fear that you will be targeted by any political party. If there are valid concerns with the current financial disclosure laws, then Congress should do the work of legislating a thoughtful solution.

Privacy and civil liberties are founding principles of our nation – ones that are not to be taken lightly. I appreciate your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,



Kevin Brady
Republican Leader
Committee on Ways and Means