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Aug. 13, 2015



To paraphrase the fictional newscaster Howard Beale (played by the late Peter Finch) in the classic movie *Network*, tax professionals are mad as hell and they're not going to take it anymore.

There's been a groundswell among tax practitioners around the country to ease the burden that has been shifted to them as a result of a dizzying array of complex laws,

rulings and regulations, combined with another round of budget cuts at the IRS. In

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the IRS each year (see sidebar).

It has also renewed calls to buck the recent trend of budget cuts at the IRS. On June 11, the House appropriations committee voted to slash the IRS budget by another \$838 million, a proposed 7.7 percent decrease that has further agitated practitioners.

The NSA has created an online petition to generate more support for the Tax Practitioners Bill of Rights. In connection with the petition, Marilyn M. Niwao, NSA President, posted the following message:

“For many years Congress and the IRS have been shifting the heavy burden of making our nation’s tax system work onto the shoulders of tax practitioners. Retroactive tax laws, deteriorating IRS service, and undue IRS demands during tax filing seasons now increasingly define the world where tax practitioners work. Members of our hard working profession are frustrated and have been asking for help for years. NSA has listened and has taken the initiative to develop a *Tax Practitioners’ Bill of Rights* as a first step towards reversing this trend.”

The petition reflects the increased frustration by accounting professionals over the current state of affairs. In its press release on the mailing to Congress, NSA Executive Vice President John Ams noted, “The IRS also needs to change its procedures and respect the needs of taxpayers and tax practitioners. For example, the IRS has scheduled computer maintenance and downtime in the few days before returns are due. This has nothing to do with funding – it has to do with common sense.”

NSA members have also complained that IRS agents want to schedule meetings with them during March and April at the height of tax return season. “Everyone, including IRS agents, knows that returns are due on April 15, so why not schedule something in May or June instead? Again, a lack of common sense,” added Ams.

Tax reforms for both taxpayers and practitioners could become a more meaningful

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What's in the Tax Preparer Bill of Rights?

The NSA Tax Practitioners Bill of Rights includes the following:

1. The Right to Have Tax Laws and Rules Passed in a Timely Manner, Including:

- a. The right to have tax laws affecting the current tax year enacted no later than September 1 of that year.
- b. The right to have IRS forms reflecting any new tax laws for the current year available no later than October 1 of that year.

2. The Right to Quality Service from the IRS, Including:

- a. The right to have telephone calls answered within 15 minutes, on a practitioner-only hotline, staffed by competent/knowledgeable employees.
- b. The right to have taxpayer correspondence answered within 20 days.
- c. The right to have any collection action on the taxpayer's account frozen while the IRS is considering a taxpayer's timely filed response to IRS collection activity.
- d. The right to have one IRS representative deal with a tax issue from start to finish until the issue is resolved.
- e. The right to request a supervisor be involved in resolving a matter if the initiating IRS representative is unwilling or unable to resolve an issue.
- f. The right for practitioners with Practitioner Tax Identification Numbers (PTINs) to communicate electronically with the IRS on taxpayer matters in a secure manner.

3. The Right to Practice Without Undue IRS Demands During Tax Filing Season,

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c. The right to have an IRS moratorium on planned software maintenance and computer downtime periods during the three weeks immediately before major tax deadlines such as March 15, April 15, September 15, October 15 of each year.

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