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Ken Berry, JD • Jan. 24, 2018

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According to Politico, multiple sources say that Trump will nominate Charles “Chuck” Rettig to be the next IRS Commissioner, replacing John Koskinen, who stepped down amidst turmoil at the end of his term in November. Rettig is an attorney with the law firm of Hochman, Salkin, Rettig, Toscher & Perez, headquartered in Beverly Hills, California, with more than 35 years of experience. He has a long history of representing clients before the IRS, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and state taxing authorities. The White House has declined to comment on the Politico report.

If nominated and approved, Rettig faces an uphill battle in turning around the IRS, which has suffered in recent years from a dwindling budget and several black eyes, including the “Tea Party scandal” that unfolded under Koskinen’s watch. The scandal, in which conservative-leaning nonprofit groups seeking tax-exempt status were targeted for extra scrutiny, resulted in the dismissal of several high-ranking IRS officials.

Rettig would also be charged with shepherding the IRS through a transition period under the historic Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) passed by Congress late last year. The TCJA includes many provisions backed by Trump, such as lower taxes for individuals and businesses and cutbacks of long-cherished deductions. It’s not yet clear if lawmakers will loosen the purse strings so the IRS can better accommodate the changes that will be taking place over the next year.

There doesn’t appear to be any significant connection between President Trump and Rettig, although the tax attorney has gone on record as supporting the billionaire-turned-politician’s refusal to release his personal tax returns while being audited. In a February 2016 piece that appeared in Forbes, where he served as a regular contributor, Rettig expressed his opinion.

“Is there any legal impediment to Trump publicly releasing his tax returns?”

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But don't think that Rettig would be a complete stranger to the movers and shakers in the D.C. tax community. He's a familiar face around town because of the tax litigation he's been involved with, plus he pulled a stint as the chairperson on the IRS Advisory Council, a group that advises the Commissioner's office on tax administration issues. This Washington outsider should not have much difficulty negotiating his way around the inner circle if he ends up with the job.

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