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# Supreme Court Says Congress Can Have Trump's Tax Returns

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*By David G. Savage, Los Angeles Times (via TNS).*

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday denied President Donald Trump's plea to shield his tax returns from being turned over to a House committee.

The decision came in a one-line order with no dissents.

The court's action has the effect of upholding a longstanding request from House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal, D-Mass., for six years of Trump's tax returns. Neal acted under a law that says the IRS "shall furnish" the committee chairman with "any return or return information" that he requested in writing.

The law does not authorize a public release of any tax returns, including those of a former president. Rather the Ways and Means Committee is authorized to examine the returns in confidence to consider new or revised legislation.

But the long legal battle is ending just as the Democrats are about to lose control of the House, raising doubts about whether Neal's Republican successor will continue the effort.

Trump and his lawyers had already lost before a federal district judge appointed by Trump and an appeals court panel with two Republican appointees.

Trump, who last week announced he will run for president in 2024, filed an emergency appeal asking the justices to intervene and block the IRS from turning over his tax records to the committee.

Trump's legal team argued that doing so would "undermine the separation of powers" and leave all future presidents exposed to having their private tax returns exposed by political opponents in Congress.

"No prior Congress has used its legislative power to obtain and expose the private financial information of a president," Trump's attorneys said in their final appeal Nov.14.

Moreover, they argued that time had run out on House Democrats.

"The old Congress has only a few days left on its legislative calendar. Though a few days is enough time to improperly expose the most sensitive documents of its chief political rival, it's not enough time to properly study, draft, debate, or pass legislation," the Trump legal team said.

Two years ago, the Supreme Court handed down a split decision when it considered two cases involving Trump's taxes.

In the first, the justices cleared the way for New York prosecutors to obtain Trump's returns, and those records played a role in civil and criminal charges that were brought against his real estate organization.

In the second case, the court blocked subpoenas from three House committees that sought financial records from the then-president, his family and his businesses.

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. cited the "separation of powers" and questioned whether House Democrats had legitimate legislative reasons for seeking personal information from the chief executive.

Trump's lawyers cited that decision in Trump vs. Mazars in their suit to block Neal from obtaining the now ex-president's records from the firm that prepared his businesses' taxes.

Since 1977, presidents had routinely released their tax returns, but Trump refused to do so. And while the IRS had a policy of carefully auditing the returns of the president, Neal said the committee had doubts about whether the agency had looked into Trump's far-flung holdings.

"Unlike his predecessors, Mr. Trump owned a complex web of businesses, engaged in business activities internationally and had a history of aggressive tax avoidance (as he has boasted)," House lawyers told the court.

In 2019, Trump's treasury secretary rejected Neal's request for Trump's tax returns, arguing it was more of a political ploy than a congressional effort to explore the need for new legislation.

After Trump was defeated in 2020, Neal submitted a new request, and it was approved by the new Biden administration.

Trump then went to court seeking to block the release.

U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden, a Trump appointee, dismissed his lawsuit last December, and the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington affirmed that decision in August by a 3-0 vote.

McFadden cautioned that his ruling did not authorize the public release of Trump's taxes.

“Public disclosure of another’s tax returns is a grave offense, and prior committee chairmen have wisely resisted using” the law “to publicize individuals’ returns,” he wrote.

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