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released remains unclear.

Dec. 20, 2022



By Nolan D. McCaskill, Los Angeles Times (TNS)

A House panel voted Tuesday along party lines to release former President Donald Trump's tax returns, an unprecedented move that marks the culmination of a yearslong legal battle to disclose his financial records.

Republicans said the move underscored Democrats' ongoing obsession with Trump. They warned that it would create a dangerous weapon that could be used against other politicians, business executives, labor leaders and even private citizens.

Many Democrats cheered the move as long overdue. Unlike other modern presidents,

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on the need to craft legislation and that they would not simply release confidential information to the public.

But now Democrats are under pressure to act, since Republicans will take over the House in January.

After meeting privately for more than three hours, Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee outvoted the minority of Republicans who opposed releasing the documents. The committee said information such as Social Security numbers and bank account numbers would be redacted.

“This is not about being punitive. This is not about being malicious,” Chairman Richard E. Neal, D-Mass., told reporters after the vote.

Exactly when and how Trump’s tax information will be released was unclear. It’s possible that Trump will return to the courts to block the release.

The tax fight comes amid a rough week for the former president. On Monday, the House panel investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol unanimously **recommended that Trump be prosecuted** for insurrection, obstruction of an official proceeding of Congress, knowingly and willfully making materially false statements to the federal government and conspiracy to defraud the United States.

After Democrats won control of the House in the 2018 midterms, Neal requested six years of Trump’s personal and business tax returns from Charles Rettig, then the commissioner of the IRS.

At the time, Neal argued that the committee had a responsibility to conduct oversight to ensure that even “those elected to our highest office” are in compliance with the

nation's laws and a duty to evaluate the IRS's administration and enforcement of tax

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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," wrote U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden, a Trump appointee, as he dismissed the former president's lawsuit in December seeking to prevent the IRS from releasing the information.

After the [high court's Nov. 22 order affirming that decision](#), Neal insisted that the matter "rises above politics" and vowed to "conduct the oversight that we've sought for the last three and a half years."

But the panel is short on time, with Congress set to recess this week for the remainder of the year and Republicans poised to control the House and its committees come January.

On Tuesday, the watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington [wrote a letter to committee leaders](#) urging the panel to provide the tax documents to the Democrat-run Senate Finance Committee.

In a news conference ahead of the committee's vote Tuesday, Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas, the top Republican on the Ways and Means panel, warned that the precedent Democrats were setting would have consequences that would extend well beyond Trump.

"Longstanding privacy protections for all taxpayers have been compromised," Brady said. "Going forward, the majority chairman in the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee will have nearly unlimited power to target or make public the tax returns of private citizens—and not just private citizens: political enemies, business and labor leaders or even the returns of Supreme Court justices themselves."

“No party in Congress should have that power. No individuals in Congress should

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“It could just be his own vanity,” he continued. “It could be that he’s not as rich as he has been telling people for years that he is. It could be that everything is legal in there, but he didn’t pay any taxes and knows that will look bad. But it could be things that are more serious.”

Though Trump has not made his tax information public, [The New York Times](#) reported in 2020 that he paid just \$750 in federal income taxes in 2016 and 2017 and no income tax in 10 of the previous 15 years, “largely because he reported losing so much more money than he made,” the newspaper wrote.

As president, Trump was under intense scrutiny for his business practices. Foreign leaders flocked to his former Washington hotel. The House Oversight and Reform Committee [released documents](#) last month showing that six nations spent more than \$750,000 at Trump International Hotel.

Brady, who is retiring at the end of this Congress, refused to speculate about how Republicans might respond to Democrats’ action but said the IRS would be a focus of the committee over the next two years.

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