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IRS \$20 Million Response To Latest Pile of Lois Lerner Emails Is Worrisome

Lois Lerner's latest lost and found hoard of 6,400 newly discovered emails may end up not showing much. The IRS didn't find them. A watchdog did. Maybe they will underscore the targeting and Ms. Lerner's political chops honed [at the Federal Election Commission](#). But at least the Treasury Inspector General found the 6,400 additional emails. A little more than 10% (650) are tied to 2010 and 2011. The rest date to 2012.

But the IRS statement in response to this latest revelation is, well, a little disturbing:

“ We welcome the Inspector General's recovery of these Lois Lerner emails. This is an encouraging development that will help resolve remaining questions and dispel uncertainty surrounding the emails.

The IRS has been committed to cooperating fully with the investigations. We understand that, during the course of the past 10 months, the Inspector General found about 650 emails from the period affected by the hard-drive crash. It's important to note that last summer, the IRS produced 24,000 emails from that period.

The IRS will continue to cooperate with the Inspector General and the congressional committees to complete work in this area, and we look forward to the results to determine what additional steps the IRS can take to ensure that we continue to improve our processes.

It's important to note that the IRS has produced to Congress more than 1.3 million pages of documents related to the investigation, including more than 147,000 emails. [Total](#) estimated cost of just the IRS portion is at least \$20 million.



The IRS has not exactly seamlessly cooperated, and Mr. Koskinen who runs the IRS has had a prickly relationship with investigators and with Congress. He has sometimes appeared to be annoyed that he is being asked any questions at all. Of course, the IRS said in 2014 (a little late?) that Ms. Lerner's computer crashed in 2011.

Oops, no one's fault that we lost a few years worth of emails. We kept being reminded how hard the IRS looked and how *terribly expensive* it was that the IRS had to do this. Yet the inspector general found about 35,000 emails from recycled back-up tapes. It then turned out that the key IRS IT people weren't even asked to look at back up tapes. Isn't this a little insulting?

The IRS's admission that it couldn't find Lerner's emails reinvigorated congressional investigations into the IRS. Of course, the IRS sort of apologized in May 2013 for singling out Tea Party groups seeking tax-exempt status. But the seeming cover-up doesn't exactly seem sorry.

President Obama said there was [not a smidgen of corruption](#) at the IRS. He said any missteps were innocent and entirely the fault of [bonehead decisions in local offices](#). If you are still not convinced it is all so innocent, right before the April 15 tax filings, a new batch of [IRS documents](#) was released. [One email](#) from former IRS firebrand Lois Lerner is particularly revealing.

Sure, she said she did nothing wrong, she was the victim, and she still took the Fifth. But in February 2012, she wanted to "put together some training points to help them [IRS staffers] understand the potential pitfalls" of revealing too much information to Congress. This is the IRS

version of don't tell. You might have assumed that retired but officially silent Lois Lerner—who ran a key IRS division—might face charges.

Congress found her in contempt after she professed her innocence, and *thereafter* [took the Fifth](#). Much later, she [broke her silence to Politico, saying she did nothing wrong](#), claiming that *she* was the victim. The U.S. Attorney's Office was supposedly considering prosecution, but now it announced she is off the hook and [will not be charged with contempt](#). So said a [seven-page letter](#) the U.S. Attorney—on his last day in office—sent to Speaker John A. Boehner with the news and its rationale.

A spokesman for Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) said the committee hopes the new emails will bring the panel closer to releasing the findings of its IRS investigation. Wouldn't some answers be nice?

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