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IRS As Rebellious Teenager

The IRS is in a bad place, rarely having faced a mad-as-hell-and-not-going-to-take-it-any-more backlash. Yet, like dealing with a disaffected teenager, we must find a way to co-exist. True, the Tea Party targeting scandal remains unresolved. See [New Links Emerge in the IRS Scandal](#). Plus, IRS expenses are being questioned after some [IRS Brass Spent \\$100K Each On Travel](#).



(Photo credit: Michele Schaffer)

The kitschy [Star Trek](#), Gilligan's Island and [line dancing videos](#) haven't helped. An assertion of the Fifth Amendment is the ultimate silent treatment. [House Committee Votes IRS Official Must Testify Despite Fifth Amendment](#). As some clamor for shuttering the agency, a 24% budget cut in our age of obesity is like gastric bypass surgery, much more than an allowance cut.

For the new Commissioner, this turn-around job won't be easy. [Obama Picks John Koskinen To Revamp IRS As Next Commissioner](#). Public confidence in the tax system is key. After all, we self-assess our taxes by filing returns, passing the IRS collection plate. If people become too disenchanted, some might stop altogether. Understandably, many Americans want reassurance on key points:

1. We Want To Be Dealt With Fairly. Given all the many complex and special rules in the tax law, one taxpayer can be treated very differently from another seemingly in the same position. That isn't fair. We also need fundamental ***procedural*** fairness and non-discrimination. On the whole, the IRS does an incredible job administering our horribly unwieldy tax laws. If you are not being dealt with fairly and respectfully, complain, ask for a manager or go to the IRS Taxpayer Advocate's Office.

2. We Don't Want Others To Get Away with Anything. We all know that many people manipulate tax rules. It's almost a point of pride to outsmart the tax man. Some rich people and huge companies pay too little. Some people of low and modest income pay too much. Some people prey on others too unsophisticated to know better. Reform is needed.

3. We Want Our Private Information Kept Private. This is a big challenge for the IRS and others in government. With technology and e-filing, it is a huge danger. Leaks should be dealt with severely and more safeguards are needed.

4. We Want IRS Employees To Be Policed. If you have a bad experience with an IRS employee, report it. The IRS does care. Some employees are disciplined or even fired. See [IRS Non-Retaliation Policy](#). That's one reason much of the recent back story at the top is so disturbing. Unreasonable or abusive requests may happen, and you need to speak up.

5. We Don't Want More Complex Tax Laws. For the most part, complexity isn't the IRS's fault. Congress passes tax laws and fundamental reform must start with them. Sadly, though, the IRS often makes it worse. The IRS should do a better job of streamlining and explaining tax rules to make them easier.

6. We Don't Want To Be Audited! OK, this doesn't really belong on the same list, but it's still true. No matter how good the IRS gets, you don't want to be audited. Don't take unreasonable tax positions. Pay rather than contest small bills. Be careful what you do and how you do it. See [Shhh, Home Office And Other IRS Audit Trigger Secrets](#).

You can reach me at Wood@WoodLLP.com. This discussion is not intended as legal advice, and cannot be relied upon for any purpose without the services of a qualified professional.