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## **In Light of its Own Security Weaknesses, Kelley Calls On IRS To Halt Plan to Privatize Tax Debt Collection**

**Washington, D.C.**—The head of the union representing Internal Revenue Service (IRS) employees today called on the IRS to halt plans to privatize tax debt collection in light of news reports that the IRS is investigating whether internal agency practices may have allowed unauthorized access to taxpayers' private financial information.

In a letter to IRS Commissioner Mark Everson, President Colleen M. Kelley of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) said she was concerned by a media report of an IRS investigation to determine whether there has been unauthorized access to IRS-held sensitive taxpayer and bank account information—and that the IRS investigation wouldn't be complete until at least the end of summer.

The IRS is planning on moving ahead later this year with an ill-advised plan to hire private contractors to collect tax debts in exchange for a bounty of up to 25 percent of the money they collect. NTEU has been leading the fight against the plan, which is drawing an increasing amount of bipartisan concern in Congress because of the serious risk to private taxpayer information.

“American taxpayers deserve to know if the IRS's internal security of taxpayer information is vulnerable before allowing any private contractors, and all of their employees, access to private

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taxpayer information,” Kelley wrote to Everson.

What’s more, Kelley called into question the IRS’ willingness to contract only with private companies “which hold security of taxpayer information to the highest standards.” Specifically, she sharply criticized the agency’s decision to enter into a \$20 million contract for batch processing with ChoicePoint, Inc., a company that earlier year discovered it had sold the personal and private information on 145,000 Americans to thieves. This action demonstrates that security may not be the agency’s “overriding concern,” Kelley said.

“I urge you to slow down the rush to privatize debt collection services until (the IRS) can assure all taxpayers that their information is safe and secure,” Kelley wrote.

NTEU is the largest independent federal union, representing some 150,000 employees in 30 agencies and departments, including about 94,000 in the IRS.

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