

IRS Modernization

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For more information, contact:
Mary Moore Hamrick
National Managing Principal of
Public Policy
T +1202 521 1545
E PublicPolicy@us.gt.com

IRS reform

Grant Thornton LLP applauds the bipartisan efforts to enact legislation to strengthen and reform the IRS. As a nationwide tax, audit and advisory firm with more than 8,000 employees, Grant Thornton regularly represents individual and business taxpayers before the IRS. We support efforts that would modernize IRS technology, bolster customer service, and assure fair and timely resolution of disputes.

As the Senate considers responding to the House's IRS reform bills and Congress works toward a potential final agreement, we urge lawmakers to support three critical provisions to improve tax administration and make taxpayer interactions with the IRS more efficient and equitable:

- Create an independent Office of Appeals
- Require the IRS to create a comprehensive customer service plan
- Mandate the creation of online accounts for all taxpayers

Independent Office of Appeals

An independent appeals process is critical to ensuring fair treatment and reducing litigation, which is costly and uncertain to both taxpayers and the IRS. In order for the appeals process to work, taxpayers must have universal access to the appeals process and trust that it is truly independent from the examination function of the IRS. Lawmakers should support provisions such as section 11101 of H.R. 5444, which would codify a fully independent Office of Appeals in the tax code and limit the IRS's ability to deny taxpayers access to it.

Customer service plan

Excellent customer service is good for both taxpayers and tax administration. Taxpayers can better fulfill their filing and payment obligations with access to prompt and knowledgeable guidance. Funding challenges and competing priorities have eroded core customer service functions such as the ability to reach the IRS by phone and receive relevant answers. Lawmakers should support provisions such as section 11201 of H.R. 5444, which would require the IRS to develop a long-term comprehensive customer service plan.

Online access to taxpayer information

Taxpayers and their representatives need ready access to their IRS tax accounts to fulfill filing and payment obligations efficiently. Under current law, taxpayers have limited access to online information, and can perform only a few functions. Obtaining information through an official transcript request can be slow and difficult. We urge lawmakers to support provisions such as section 202 of H.R. 5445, which would require the IRS to develop online portals in which individual and business taxpayers, and their designated representatives, could obtain information, pay taxes, submit documentation, and perform other functions.

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