

Nina E. Olson

National Taxpayer Advocate



Nina E. Olson, the National Taxpayer Advocate (NTA), is the “voice of the taxpayer” within the IRS and before Congress. She leads the Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS), an independent organization inside the IRS that helps taxpayers resolve their IRS account problems and works for systemic change to mitigate problems experienced by groups of taxpayers.

Ms. Olson was appointed to the position of National Taxpayer Advocate in January 2001. Under her leadership, the NTA's Annual Report to Congress has become an important vehicle for change. It is one of two reports the NTA is required by statute to deliver each year, and it outlines the most serious problems facing taxpayers and makes recommendations for administrative and legislative change. The IRS has implemented hundreds of the recommendations she has made for administrative change. Members of Congress have introduced bills to implement dozens of her recommendations for legislative change, and 15 of them have been enacted into law.

In June 2014, the IRS adopted the Taxpayer Bill of Rights for which Ms. Olson had long advocated, grouping dozens of existing rights in the Internal Revenue Code into ten broad categories, thereby making them more clear, understandable, and accessible for taxpayers and IRS employees alike. In 2015, Congress enacted these 10 rights into law.

Ms. Olson has received widespread recognition for her work on behalf of taxpayers. In 2017, she received the Jules Ritholz Memorial Merit Award for outstanding dedication, achievement, and integrity in the field of civil and criminal tax controversies. In 2016, Tax Analysts honored her as one of ten Outstanding Women in Tax. The award recognized her as a global tax pioneer, influencing tax administration and policy on an international scale. Ms. Olson was selected to give the 2013 Woodworth Lecture, sponsored by Pettit College of Law at Ohio Northern University. Ms. Olson is a member of the American College of Tax Counsel and delivered the group's prestigious Griswold Lecture in January 2010. The non-profit Tax Foundation selected her to receive its Public Sector Distinguished Service Award in 2007. Money magazine named her one of 12 "Class Acts of 2004," and Accounting Today magazine has named her one of its Top 100 Most Influential People in the accounting profession each year since 2004.

Prior to her appointment as the NTA, Ms. Olson founded and served as Executive Director of The Community Tax Law Project, the first independent § 501(c)(3) low income taxpayer clinic in the United States. From 1975 until 1991, she owned a tax planning and preparation firm in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

An attorney licensed in Virginia and North Carolina, Ms. Olson served as the chair of the American Bar Association (ABA) Section of Taxation's Low Income Taxpayers Committee as well as the Pro Se/Pro Bono Task Force of the ABA Section of Taxation's Court Procedure Committee. She is the 1999 recipient of both the Virginia Bar Association's Pro Bono Publico Award and the City of Richmond Bar Association's Pro Bono Award. Ms. Olson graduated from Bryn Mawr College, cum laude, with an A.B. in Fine Arts. She received her J.D., cum laude, from North Carolina Central School of Law and her Master of Laws in Taxation, with distinction, from Georgetown University Law Center. Ms. Olson has served as an adjunct professor at several law schools.