

“Examining the Allegations of Misconduct against IRS Commissioner John Koskinen, Part I”
House Committee on the Judiciary
May 24, 2016

Statement for the Record

Submitted by Rep. Hank Johnson on June 7, 2016

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Conyers,

Once again, this body finds itself at the mercy of the Republican majority who wish to pursue an extremist agenda. This insistence to hold a baseless “impeachment but not really an impeachment hearing” was secured by the Freedom Caucus against the wise counsel of its own party leadership and with little consideration to the pressing matters facing this Committee. This is chicanery and smoke & mirror politics at its finest and highlights how out of touch the Freedom Caucus is with the real concerns of the American people.

The last time a civil servant was impeached by the House was in the case of Major General William W. Belknap, U.S. Secretary of War to then President Ulysses S. Grant, in 1876.

Let’s compare Belknap’s trial with what Commissioner Koskinen is facing and we will see how unprecedented this hearing is. Belknap – who prior to serving as a member of Grant’s cabinet was an internal revenue collector – was accused of accepting bribes so merchants could gain preferential access to the extremely lucrative military Indian Trading Posts administered by the War Department.

Commissioner Koskinen, on the other hand, is a man who rose to the call of public service and took the reins of a beleaguered federal agency – an agency already facing six investigations at the start of his tenure – not a corrupt cabinet official with a history of accepting kickbacks. His cooperativeness in the face of such congressional scrutiny has even been noted by those investigating him, such as Senator Hatch.

The IRS, the Department of Justice, the Senate Finance Committee, the Treasury Inspector General, and even the National Archives found no evidence the Commissioner willfully deceived this Congress, engaged in obstructionist behavior, broke any federal laws, was politically motivated or failed to lead a thorough investigation. This is by no means grounds for this hearing – not when confronted with the facts as we know it and in the shadow of history.

Instead of taking real action on issues critical to the American people, we find ourselves today spending millions in taxpayer dollars mired in political witch hunts and baseless accusations.

This hearing is not only a waste of time and money, Mr. Chairman, but another attempt to discredit the government rather than actually governing it.

I thank you and I yield back.