

Mr. Chairman, Senator Coons, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify.

As I've considered over the last few weeks what it was I wanted to say to you today, I had many thoughts running through my mind, and I received thoughtful counsel from many colleagues and close advisors.

After much thought, and not a little bit of prayerful consideration, here's what I'd like to say:

As Americans, we enjoy rights granted to us by our Creator, rights protected by the limited government established by our Founding Fathers, rights guaranteed by our Constitution.

I am exercising at least two of those rights today – the right to free speech, and the right to petition my government for redress of grievances.

And I thank you for giving me this opportunity to exercise those rights.

Now, about those grievances ...

What we've experienced at Tea Party Patriots over the last six years, and what we've learned over the past two years plus, leads me to the following:

For years, the most feared, most threatening, most coercive civil agency of the federal leviathan, the Internal Revenue Service, ran roughshod over the fundamental freedoms of speech and association enshrined in the very first amendment to our Constitution ... and we're still waiting for someone in a position of authority and responsibility to actually do something about it.

Last week, the President of the United States sat for an interview on a popular comedy show and joked, laughed, and denied that any deliberate targeting had been undertaken, and shrugged off the suggestion that any conspiracy had taken place – even though documents released just a week earlier showed that Lois Lerner had met in 2010 with attorneys from the Justice Department and a representative of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to discuss using campaign finance laws to bring criminal charges against conservative non-profit organizations who were simply exercising their First Amendment rights.

Shame on you, Mr. President. You should know better.

Were we hurt by the decision to target us? Of course.

Groups and individuals were affected from east to west, north to south, and in between. The Albuquerque TP in New Mexico, founded by Rick Morlen ... a West Point graduate, and an Army Cavalry veteran. The El Dorado Hills Educational Foundation in California ... the West Jersey Tea Party in New Jersey, which had a board member who was a CPA with his own professional practice answering the IRS's questions. The Coalition for a Conservative Majority

in Colorado ... the Maui Tea Party ... the South Metro Tea Party in Minnesota. The IRS personally called out Justin Binnick Thomas from Ohio by name in one of the targeting questionnaires. The list goes on and on.

I cannot count the number of times supporters of our movement have come up to me in tears after a speech with fear in their voice, an envelope from the IRS in their hands, to ask me how they can work to make this out of control agency stop, and how to bring about constitutionally limited government.

Know this: I sit here today for these groups and individual Americans.

There are groups that gave up begging their government for approval to associate, and chose to exercise free speech independently instead.

The targeting forced us to spend time and money educating our members and supporters.

It forced us to spend time and money educating the press.

It forced us to spend time and money researching from inside our own network the information needed for the various House and Senate committees investigating the matter.

Two people on our support team made over 1,000 phone calls in the spring and summer of 2013 to make sure we had the details necessary to provide various Congressional Committees with the information and evidence they needed.

We arranged town hall meetings to discuss the issues, and we coordinated and paid for travel for our Local Coordinators to come to Washington to testify and/or talk to committee staff.

We filed FOIA requests, and we paid for smart lawyers to help us understand the gibberish and thousands of redacted pages of paper we got in response.

And, of course, we had to spend precious man-hours filling out all those crazy questionnaires from the IRS in the first place.

We estimate we spent at least 4,500 man-hours working on IRS targeting related issues. Think about that for a minute: 4,500 man-hours. That's the equivalent of 1 employee working 2 ½ years on this issue alone – just since 2013.

Some have asked us to put a price tag on what the IRS targeting cost us. But how do you put a price on free speech?

Whether it costs us \$1 or \$1 million, somewhere in between or more, it does not matter. Free speech in America should never be silenced, no matter the dollar amount.

Were we stopped by the decision to target us? Of course not.

None of these things were going to stop us.

Let me tell you – it has NOT been easy.

We were a threat to our political opposition. The tea party movement has been targeted by the White House and the President's henchmen in the IRS, maligned by the Republican establishment who talk a good game and want our votes – but are ready to ditch our principles the day they are sworn in.

The opposition did all they could to destroy us, to crush us.

They underestimated one thing: Our country is more important to us than the IRS with its intimidation tactics, more important to us than a President who thinks this is a laughing matter when nothing could be further from the truth, and more important to us than anyone else in any government agency or elected office who wants to stop us.

Our country, our freedom, and our future are more important than that.

Tea Party Patriots is doing just fine, Mr. Chairman – we have 665 active local chapters, over 600,000 email addresses, over 2 million people in our database, working every day for our principles and our mission.

NO ONE, from the President of the United States to the Commissioner of the IRS or any big cheese in Washington is going to trample on our rights without a fight.

We have had everything thrown at us, but we are still here. We are not going away, and we are living proof that when a FEW good people are willing to speak truth to power, we can change things.

The IRS, this administration, and anyone else in Washington can throw what they will at us ... but we are not going away. We will not be deterred.

Because we are Americans.

And we are just getting started.

Again, Mr. Chairman, Sen. Coons, and members of the Committee ... thank you for hearing me out.