

DODD, LIEBERMAN, LARSON QUESTION IRS' HARTFORD PROBE Letter asks for explanation of test focused on C

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 14, 2004
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Letter asks for explanation of test focused on CT Capital

WASHINGTON - Sens. Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman and Rep. John Larson are asking the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to explain why Hartford has become the focus of a certification test centered on recipients of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The IRS probe would consist of an "Earned Income Tax Credit Certification Test" about to be conducted for IRS in significant part in Hartford.

In a letter to IRS Commissioner Mark W. Everson, the Legislators expressed concern about the adverse impact on those who are surveyed. The letter also questioned why approximately one-third of the 25,000 nationwide recipients of this test reside in Hartford.

"Our offices fully support IRS efforts to eliminate fraud and waste in the EITC program, and also to assure that eligible citizens are aware of EITC," the letter said. "However, if the test's purpose is to ascertain whether such a certification requirement would intimidate legitimate EITC claimants, it would be clearly unacceptable for the IRS to cause precisely that result in this test. Please advise us on the steps you will take to ensure that this test will not itself cause the adverse impact it is intended to study."

Text of the letter is below.

The Honorable Mark W. Everson
IRS Commissioner
1111 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20224

Sent by Fax: 202-622-4733

Dear Commissioner Everson:

We are writing to express deep concern regarding an "Earned Income Tax Credit Certification Test" about to be conducted for IRS in significant part in Hartford, Connecticut. There is substantial apprehension in Hartford about this test, the criteria used to select Hartford, and the impact of the test on city residents who are surveyed. We are enclosing Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez's letter expressing his concerns. We request that you respond to Mayor Perez's letter in detail as quickly as possible and well before the proposed test begins.

It is our understanding that the IRS test is directed at 25,000 taxpayers nationwide, with about one third of the total selected in Hartford . We would appreciate a full explanation of why Hartford was selected for the focus of this study and not other comparable areas.

In addition, we understand that this is the second survey of this size to be commissioned, and that its purpose is to determine whether imposing a nationwide certification requirement for EITC claimants regarding the number of their dependents might have the unintended effect of intimidating legitimate claimants. We understand that the IRS has not yet determined whether a certification requirement will, in fact, be imposed nationally, and if this test determines that such a test will intimidate legitimate claimants, it might not impose the requirement. We ask that you confirm our understanding of these IRS representations.

Our offices fully support IRS efforts to eliminate fraud and waste in the EITC program, and also to assure that eligible citizens are aware of EITC. However, if the test's purpose is to ascertain whether such a certification requirement would intimidate legitimate EITC claimants, it would be clearly unacceptable for the IRS to cause precisely that result in this test. Please advise us on the steps you will take to ensure that this test will not itself cause the adverse impact it is intended to study.

Finally, our offices have been told that the information IRS acquires from this test will not be used by the IRS in any way as the basis for any audit or action against the taxpayers who are surveyed. This assurance is vital and the way any information acquired will be handled needs to be set forth in detail if this study is to be accepted as well as to be sound and objective. We ask that you confirm the details of this critical representation.

Until all these issues we have listed are resolved, we request and expect that the IRS test will not be implemented. Thank you very much for your immediate assistance on this issue which is of great importance to the Hartford, Connecticut community.

Sincerely,

Senator Lieberman
Senator Dodd
Congressman Larson

CC: The Honorable Dave Williams
Project Director, EITC
Sent by Fax: 202-622-9660

Mayor Eddie A. Perez
City of Hartford
Sent by Fax: 860-722-6606
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