

Statement of Charles P. Rettig
Nominee to serve as Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service
Senate Finance Committee
June 28, 2018

Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden, it is an honor to appear before the Senate Finance Committee as the President's nominee to serve as Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service.

Before I go any further I would like to recognize my family who are with me today—my wife Tam, my sister-in-law Jan, my stepsons Dayton and Trenton, my daughter Christina, and my son Charlie. I cannot explain what their love and support mean to me.

Charlie serves as a Captain in the U.S. Army and returned just days ago from a 12-month deployment overseas. When I was nominated he proudly pointed out, "Dad, you'll be following me into public service." Nothing would make me prouder. He also taught me something about the tax code—that he has 180 days from when he left the Sinai Peninsula to file his tax return.

I would also like to acknowledge my father, who built an air-conditioning business that taught my brother and me the value of hard work. I was the first in my family to finish college, and through undergrad, law school, and graduate school they often joked that I would never stop studying—and they were right.

For more than 35 years, I have worked with all levels of the IRS to achieve resolutions on behalf of taxpayers and bring them back into compliance with our system of voluntary self-assessment. I have served as Chair of the IRS Advisory Council and in a similar role in my home state of California. I am currently Vice-Chair, Administration for the 12,000 member Taxation Section of the American Bar Association. I also serve as President of the American College of Tax Counsel.

Through decades of experience working across the table from the IRS, I have seen the difficulties faced by taxpayers of all kinds—from large employers, to small businesses, to low-income taxpayers who need help. When the IRS started "Problem Solving Days" to allow taxpayers to come in without an appointment, I organized dozens of tax professionals in my area to assist unrepresented taxpayers who appeared at the IRS seeking a resolution of a tax issue. I've also devoted a significant amount of time assisting taxpayers who can't afford professional help on a pro bono basis.

Throughout my career I have also been privileged to work with many professional and hard-working IRS employees and, if confirmed, would be honored to work alongside them and earn their respect. Despite the challenges it faces, the IRS is fortunate to have an experienced workforce committed to its mission.

In my career I have seen the impact of those challenges firsthand. Long waits on the phone and inadequate IT systems are significant sources of frustration. If confirmed, I will work with this Committee to take on these and other challenges with the impact on taxpayers in mind. We cannot fall into the trap of viewing the challenges the IRS faces as facts of life but must work together to solve them.

If I am privileged to serve as Commissioner, my overriding goal will be to strengthen and rebuild trust between the IRS, the American people, and their representatives in Congress. That trust is critical to all that the IRS does — particularly as it works with the Department of the Treasury to implement once-in-a-generation tax reform legislation enacted by Congress last year. The successful implementation of that landmark reform law will be among my highest priorities as Commissioner.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge IRS Revenue Procedure 1964-22 issued by Commissioner Mortimer Caplin—a veteran of D-Day, who, at age 101, remains a legend at the IRS and throughout the tax practitioner community:

...it is the duty of the Service to carry out that policy by correctly applying the laws enacted by Congress; to determine the reasonable meaning of various Code provisions in light of the Congressional purpose in enacting them; and to perform this work in a fair and impartial manner, with neither a government nor a taxpayer point of view. . .

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify and look forward to your questions.