

Beat: News

Obama to nominate Koskinen to head IRS after tax scandal

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USPA News - U.S. President Barack Obama on Thursday announced his intent to nominate John Koskinen as the next head of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), taking over the agency that came under after after several employees were found to have deliberately targeted conservative groups. Koskinen previously served as acting chief executive officer of Freddie Mac and deputy mayor of Washington, D.C., as well as deputy director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget from 1994 to 1997. He also served in a number of other leadership positions in both the public service and private sector.

"John is an expert at turning around institutions in need of reform. With decades of experience, in both the private and public sectors, John knows how to lead in difficult times, whether that means ensuring new management or implementing new checks and balances," Obama said. "Every part of our government must operate with absolute integrity and that is especially true for the IRS. I am confident that John will do whatever it takes to restore the public's trust in the agency." U.S. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew ousted acting IRS Commissioner Steven Miller in May over a widening scandal in which several IRS employees deliberately targeted conservative groups that sought tax-exempt status. Obama had said his administration was determined to hold those responsible accountable. Miller had presided over the nation's tax system since November 2012, when Doug Shulman's term in office ended. Miller had previously served as deputy commissioner for Services and Enforcement, providing direction and oversight for all major decisions affecting the four taxpayer-focused IRS Divisions. The firing of Miller came after a watchdog's report showed at least two employees in Cincinnati, Ohio, used inappropriate criteria to deliberately target tea party and other conservative groups that were seeking tax-exempt status. It is believed the misconduct began in early 2010 and continued for more than 18 months. "It's inexcusable, and Americans are right to be angry about it, and I am angry about it," Obama said in May as public outrage over the scandal escalated. "I will not tolerate this kind of behavior in any agency, but especially in the IRS, given the power that it has and the reach that it has into all of our lives." "It should not matter what political stripe you're from -- the fact of the matter is, is that the IRS has to operate with absolute integrity," Obama added during the May press conference. "The government generally has to conduct itself in a way that is true to the public trust. That's especially true for the IRS." Obama said he directed Lew to follow up on the watchdog's report to see how the misconduct was able to take place and who is responsible. "We're going to put in place new safeguards to make sure this kind of behavior cannot happen again," he said. "I've directed Secretary Lew to ensure the IRS begins implementing the IG's (inspector general's) recommendations right away." The president said his administration would also work with Congress as it performs its oversight role over the agency, which collects approximately \$2.4 trillion in tax revenue that funds most government operations and public services. The commissioner manages about 90,000 IRS employees and a budget of more than \$12 billion, touching every facet of American society. "I'll do everything in my power to make sure nothing like this happens again by holding the responsible parties accountable, by putting in place new checks and new safeguards, and going forward, by making sure that the law is applied as it should be - in a fair and impartial way," Obama stressed. "And we're going to have to make sure that the laws are clear so that we can have confidence that they are enforced in a fair and impartial way, and that there's not too much ambiguity surrounding these laws."

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