

## The IRS's war on women

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August 12, 2013

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In April, I wrote the IRS to contest the “automatic revocation” of the tax-exempt status of the Ladies of Liberty Alliance. We had a difficult time getting our non-profit status to begin with, and to have it revoked only months later came as a shock as we had received no warning or prior notification.

During subsequent research, I learned that no appeals process was available, so I was not expecting a response. Nonetheless, in a letter dated May 13, the IRS did write back from their Ogden, Utah branch, but only to confirm the original notice that our tax-exempt status was, in fact, being revoked. Our placement on the list of organizations who have received an Automatic Revocation of Exemption meant that my only option was to pursue the single course of action offered by the IRS – reapplication.

The story broke on May 14 that the IRS was corruptly targeting groups like ours — the day after the Utah branch sent out our response letter. Then a second letter from the IRS, dated May 28, arrived from Cincinnati.

Unlike the others, this letter was personalized and informed me that LOLA had been erroneously placed on the Automatic Revocation of Exemption List.

Without any apology or further explanation, we could forget about reapplying and get back to work. This came as a relief because the Ladies of Liberty Alliance (LOLA) is just starting out and is still a small, all-volunteer organization of women. We were founded in order to bring in more women to the growing libertarian movement and fulfill our mission by providing leadership training that educates and empowers women to spread their own message of liberty. We rely on donated time and meeting space from other non-profits such as the Mercatus Center and the Cato Institute.

Our flagship training is our media training, for which we borrow lights and cameras and film in the Reason Foundation's library in Washington. We bring in a producer from Fox to instruct and we conduct a filmed interview. We even provide attendees with an edited version of their interview and a head shot to promote themselves to producers for TV. Perhaps if we had called ourselves “Women for Progress,” training sessions like this would not have been slowed down by the IRS.

One organization that has been particularly supportive of us is the Leadership Institute, which trains a variety of conservative and libertarian groups. Reading about how they were singled out and harassed by the IRS made me realize that we may very well have been targeted after all, even though neither of us are affiliated with a political party or take positions on public policy issues.

Was it because attendees of our training sessions generally seek to decrease the size of government and promote free markets and peace? After all, the president's administration does not support any of these things.

That said, there is no litmus test for women attending our training sessions and we do not even discuss specific policy issues in our training sessions. To be targeted for providing individual women with tools that they can use to better themselves is an egregious abuse of power.

Many groups believe they have been singled out for extra scrutiny, and the sequence of these letters demonstrates that LOLA was likely among them. Did this slow us down temporarily? Yes. But it has also strengthened our resolve to continue pursuing our mission to empower others to make a difference for liberty and for America.