

2012 Meeting Minutes Refund Processing Communications

- November 1, 2012
- October 4, 2012
- September 6, 2012
- August 2, 2012
- July 12, 2012
- May 24 – 24, 2012
- May 3, 2012
- April 5, 2012
- March 1, 2012
- February 2, 2012
- January 3, 2012

Refund Processing Communications Meeting Minutes November 1, 2012

Designated Federal Officer

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Officer |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| • Brandewie, Shaun | Akron, OH | Member |
| • Dell, Jack | Hayden, ID | Member |
| • Granger, Jackie | West Bend, WI | Member |
| • Kelly, Eileen | Wilmette, IL | Member |
| • Kosanovich, Matt | Columbus, OH | Member |
| • Purkayastha, PK | Saline, MI | Chair |
| • Ralph, Thomas | Webster, MA | Member |
| • Wongshue, Lisa | Orlando, FL | Vice Chair |

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------|
| • Bekolo, Paulette | Chapel Hill, NC | Member |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------|

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Tiffany Todaro | Oakland, CA | Acting TAP Director |
| • Jimerson, Susan | Seattle, WA | Manager |
| • Smiley, Ellen | Milwaukee, WI | Primary Program Analyst |
| • Robb, Patti | Milwaukee, WI | Program Analyst |
| • Maine, Kymberly | Seattle, WA | Secretary |

Program Owners

- | | | |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| • Awalt, Debbie | | Program Analyst |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|



- Momon-Townsend, Deb'orah

Program Manager

Welcome/Opening

Committee Chair PK Purkayastha welcomed everyone.

Quorum met.

TAP Director

Acting TAP Director Tiffany Todaro expressed her appreciation to the members for their dedication, their time, and hard work. She also expressed her deep appreciation to the retiring members, Matt Kosanovich and Jackie Granger, who have been very engaged in their assigned committees over the past three years. Thank you for all your hard work and service. Todaro thanked Bill Wilde for his commitment as the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for this committee.

Joint Committee Report

- **Process / Closing Codes**

PK said we need to find a solution so the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) response situation does not occur again.

DFO Report

Wilde said this is his last call as he will not be a DFO next year. The DFO responsibilities will now be done by the TAP Director, the managers, and program analysts. Wilde thanked everyone for their hard work. He said he enjoyed being a member of this team and added he hoped everyone continues in their efforts.

Public Input

None

Program Owner Updates

Debbie Awalt thanked everyone for their hard work. She said she was sorry about the confusion as far as closing this issue. She hopes to have the chance to work together on one of the other committees next year.

Status Update on Project Referral

PK received comments from Kosanovich and Eileen Kelly about the way the IRS responded to our proposal. The struggle is both sides worked very hard on this recommendation. I know there is frustration in how the IRS responded as they are using TAP's closing code options and none of them really fit which causes the problem.

Kelly said she does not really care how it's closed as long as someone heard our recommendations and put some thought into how they may be figured in the future. PK said from our perspective, all we want to do is make changes for the better, and if we do, that's nice. The problem is how it is totaled up in the end. The IRS response states several of our recommendations were implemented before our proposal was submitted.



We feel like we wasted our time. The IRS didn't tell us they were already working on things or that some were already implemented. The team is not satisfied with the closing code used.

Jack Dell said he agreed with Kelly. Although he feels the IRS should have said TAP was selected for input and they would validate the project direction with the information provided by TAP. We worked as a team but never realized it was a co-project. PK added it should indicate it was a collaborative effort. That does not come across in the closing code used.

Kosanovich asked why TAP was never told the IRS was working along the same lines as well. That was never indicated.

Granger felt the big problem was the lack of communication. The IRS already had people working on this project. Then they contacted us and said they needed our final recommendation in a couple days. They should have also told us they had X, Y, and Z working on the very same project. Kelly went through every single page of the recommendation, word by word, and then a good deal of it was just kind of dismissed.

Kelly said she wondered whether the reason we were not told was because the Program Owners didn't really have an idea as to what they really wanted us to do. Shaun Brandewie agreed. The IRS didn't know how to use the committee members. He felt this whole endeavor was a waste of time. Lisa Wongshue agreed as well.

Deborah Momon-Townsend said they look for TAP to come up with issues. TAP has access to the public. You may have more data or information already. There are many facets, levels and different functions working on many things and we cannot disclose all that information. The executives don't know what information can be shared all the time. Some things aren't supposed to be shared. You were an asset because you did validate the processes that we were already working on. It just happened that some of the processes were already put in place by the time you sent your recommendation. Your team was looking at the information coming in from the taxpayers. This is a new process and this is a new direction.

Susan Jimerson said the contributions are valuable. This is a new process; going from the old way of doing things, as well as TAP moving into Systemic Advocacy. The Task Completed closing code indicates the committee does work and it was valuable.

PK said the information and data we saw this year was material that was public domain. All the information was there. We struggled because the assignment was undefined. We serve as pure volunteers. We like to be appreciated and want to see our recommendations come to fruition. The problem is that the IRS can only utilize the closing codes already identified. We should be told others are also working on an issue and who that is, and then let us talk to them to share information. That did not happen in this instance. If this continues we will truly have a trust deficit.



Ellen Smiley said when the Committee met face-to-face in April the Program Owners didn't want to give us specific sites to look at. They said they wanted the taxpayer perspective. The Committee did a very good job at doing what they were asked. We weren't assigned specific tasks and were given free range as to what we wanted to address. It's ok if they don't give us specific direction but they do need to let us know that others might be working on certain aspects. She asked what members felt would be an appropriate response to the 12 issues that were closed as already implemented.

Smiley said the IRS closed the recommendations with the codes that were available, but she also feels another code should be added: Collaborative Effort. If they can add task completed, they can add collaborative effort.

Momon-Townsend said when you choose to use collaborative effort; you need to define exactly what that means. When you decide that, we can discuss it.

PK said our issue right now is with TAP not the program owners. Why won't they support us?

Awalt said you have to come up with a closing code and then come back to us to review and then revise. It has to be identified and approved by TAP or SA and then send it back to the program owners to see if it would fit. She suggested Validated Direction. Task completed with TAP validation.

Kosanovich said he has been on the panel for 3 years and noted they ran into this frustration on other committees before. They were given a general idea on the direction the VITA Committee should go. The real challenge was the lack of definition for the panel. What are the expectations; what are the roles? Granger agreed it was a lack of communication in the beginning.

Jimerson said management is working on that this year. We want to get a clear direction for the projects.

PK said we need to come to consensus as to what the statement should be. Kelly said she would work on it but wants a little more information. We need to find a code that fits all the committees not just this committee. PK and Dell will work with Kelly. PK will write up roles for the committee.

Kelly will work on a new closing code. Smiley will obtain definitions for the current closing codes and forward it to Kelly and Dell. Dell said he hasn't familiarized himself with any documentation for final submission or IRS instructions. Brandewie said there are instructions out there – standard ways of speaking to the IRS.

Smiley explained the referral was sent through the proper channels. She will send Dell the usual forms that are used. Awalt will put the responses in the proper format and send it out.



Outreach

Please send your Outreach and Volunteer Hours Report to Smiley. Remember there are two tabs on the spreadsheet.

December Face-to-Face Travel

Jimerson said travel for the face-to-face meetings has been approved but we are still waiting for approval of the new member selections. The meetings will be in Oakland, Jacksonville, and Plantation.

We have projects approved from small Business/Self Employed but we are waiting for a response from Wage & Investment. As soon as the projects are approved, a solicitation will be sent out for your choice.

Closing

The October 4, 2012, minutes were approved as submitted. Meeting Adjourned



**Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Refund Processing Communications
Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2012**

Designated Federal Officer

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Officer |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|--------|
| • Dell, Jack | Hayden, ID | Member |
| • Granger, Jackie | West Bend, WI | Member |
| • Kelly, Eileen | Wilmette, IL | Member |
| • Purkayastha, PK | Saline, MI | Chair |
| • Ralph, Thomas | Webster, MA | Member |

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| • Bekolo, Paulette | Chapel Hill, NC | Member |
| • Brandewie, Shaun | Akron, OH | Member |
| • Kosanovich, Matt | Columbus, OH | Member |
| • Wongshue, Lisa | Orlando, FL | Vice Chair |

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Jimerson, Susan | Seattle, WA | TAP Manager |
| • Morizio, Louis | Brooklyn, NY | TAP Manager |
| • Smiley, Ellen | Milwaukee, WI | Primary Program Analyst |
| • Gabriel, Lisa | Milwaukee, WI | Program Analyst |
| • Maine, Kymberly | Seattle, WA | Secretary |

Program Owners and SMEs

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| • Momon-Townsend, Deb'orah | Atlanta, GA | Program Analyst |
| • Rice, Karin | Atlanta, GA | Supervisory Public Affairs |
| • Sneed, Sherri | Washington, DC | Program Analyst |

TAS and Systemic Advocacy

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Johnson, Barbara | Milwaukee, WI | Local Taxpayer Advocate |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|

Welcome/Opening

Committee Chair PK Purkayastha welcomed everyone. PK advised the response from the IRS to the committee's recommendations will be discussed today.

Quorum met.

Joint Committee Report

PK stated he reviewed the Joint Committee meeting minutes as he was not on the last JC call. The various Project Committees presenting their issues to JC received positive feedback on their recommendations and will be forwarded to the IRS.

DFO Report

Bill Wilde said he had reviewed this committee's responses from the IRS and was a little stunned at the responses. He said it would appear the IRS had tabled most of the proposals. It would be interesting to see what the websites look like once they are available.

Public Input

None

Program Owner Updates

Sherri Sneed had nothing to report at this time.

Review IRS Response – IRS Feedback on Recommendations

Karin Rice spoke about the IRS responses. She said the choices that were presented on the response forms did not allow her the ability to elaborate on their responses.

From the very beginning of this project committee they explained several projects were already in the process of being worked. They weren't able to elaborate on those projects because they did not know if there would be buy in. They were not withholding any information from the group; however they did not want to cloud the group's idea, directions, or decisions on the project.

PK stated he would rather have a response indicating this project was a group effort between the IRS and TAP instead of the response received on most of the recommendations indicating "resolved prior to elevation". Rice indicated they struggled with the closing codes, as the five available codes weren't quite the right response.

Discussion ensued between staff and members about appropriate closing codes for the recommendations.

Action Item: Deb'orah Momen-Townsend to contact Steve Berkey and Louis Morizio to discuss the closing codes on this committee's recommendations.

Rice provided the IRS's viewpoint on each of the recommendations and what the new systems will look like for the filing season.

She provided the following information:

- Adopt a system similar to UPS – Rice stated they reviewed different ideas and decided to use three trackers: return received, refund approved, and refund sent. When a taxpayer signs on they will see where their return is in the process. She asked that this not be shared as this has not been announced publically.
- Where's my Refund – this year there will be personalized date provided to the taxpayer when their refund will be issued instead of the estimated date. Rice said they wanted a countdown feature, but it would have put too much demand on the system, however, it is in the plans for next year. She also said once the refund is approved and released, it will provide a date of when the refund is sent to the bank along with an estimation of when the refund should be received by their bank.
- Rename the site "Where's my Return" – she said with all the current changes they were making, they felt it would be a big leap to change the name, however, it would be considered next year. She apologized to the group because she knows how strongly they felt about this.
- Include an indication of when the taxpayer's information was last updated – this was currently out of the scope of something that could be done, but they will revisit the idea when preparing for the 2014 filing season. Rice also mentioned the date stamp recommendation will be considered for the 2014 filing season.
- Make no promises – the goal is to minimize confusion and manage expectations by avoiding the use of range and setting general expectations for refund delivery. She stated with the new website and phone tool, the taxpayer will get personalized refund information.
- When to check for refund – taxpayers should be able to check for their refund status within 24 hours of filing their tax return if they e-filed. The IRS is very optimistic about the impact this will have on taxpayers during this upcoming filing season.

Additional discussion about the appropriate closing codes took place.

Louis Morizio explained the IRS provides projects to their stakeholders, like TAP, to further gain information regarding items they are working on. If TAP provides similar information, then the IRS knows they are on the right track. He said the chairs would have to put their accomplishments into their annual report for this year's TAP annual report. He explained a TIGTA inspection was previously completed on TAP and how the responses were indicated.

Action Item: It was decided that the staff and program owners would get together offline and discuss what to do about the coding of the responses.

Status Update on Project – New Directions

The members decided not to go forward with recommending changes to the refund cycle chart as it could not be completed by next month.



Susan Jimerson stated it appeared the project could fall under one of the buckets or projects for next year's TAP and could be worked then.

Outreach

None

Office Update

Susan Jimerson updated the group on the face-to-face planning session in Florida. She advised the Annual Training Face-to-Face meetings would take place the week of December 3 through December 7.

She also said the locations have not been finalized; however the three locations being considered are Oakland, CA; Fort Lauderdale, FL; and Jacksonville, FL.

Jimerson said returning members should be receiving an email asking for their choice(s) for next year's project committee. She does not know exactly when the email will be sent, but would estimate by the end of the month.

She also said the final recruiting package with the prospective new members was still being reviewed for final approval from Treasury.

Jimerson thanked the members for their hard work and dedication to the project and for representing the taxpayers' viewpoint to the IRS.

Jackie Granger asked if the committee could provide suggestions or feedback to the Joint Committee on the way the process worked this year. Eileen Kelly volunteered to write a summary and email it to the members for consideration. PK will then discuss it with the Joint Committee at this month's meeting or next month if necessary.

Closing/Meeting Adjourned

PK thanked everyone for their participation on this month's call.

Next Meeting: November 1, 2012, 2 p.m. ET / 1 p.m. CT / Noon MT / 11 a.m. PT

**Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Refund Processing Communications
Meeting Minutes
September 6, 2012**

Designated Federal Officer

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Officer |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| • Brandewie, Shaun | Akron, OH | Member |
| • Granger, Jackie | West Bend, WI | Member |
| • Kelly, Eileen | Wilmette, IL | Member |
| • Kosanovich, Matt | Columbus, OH | Member |
| • Purkayastha, PK | Saline, MI | Chair |
| • Ralph, Thomas | Webster, MA | Member |
| • Wongshue, Lisa | Orlando, FL | Vice Chair |

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------|
| • Bekolo, Paulette | Chapel Hill, NC | Member |
| • Dell, Jack | Hayden, ID | Member |

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Smiley, Ellen | Milwaukee, WI | Primary Program Analyst |
| • Gabriel, Lisa | Milwaukee, WI | Program Analyst |
| • Maine, Kymberly | Seattle, WA | Secretary |

Program Owners/SMEs

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| • Awalt, Debbie | Lanham, MD | Program Analyst |
| • Rice, Karin | Atlanta, GA | Supervisory Public Affairs |
| • Sneed, Sherri | Washington, DC | Program Analyst |

TAS and Systemic Advocacy

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Johnson, Barbara | Milwaukee, WI | Local Taxpayer Advocate |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|

Welcome/Opening

Committee Chair PK Purkayastha welcomed everyone. Quorum met.

Joint Committee Report

PK stated the Joint Committee discussed the possibility of having three locations for the annual face-to-face meetings. The virtual training would be held on Wednesday in the first week of December. The panel members would receive the virtual training simultaneously. If anyone is interested in assisting with the training portion, please email Susan Gilbert who is coordinating the training.

PK reminded everyone of the timeframe for nominations for the National TAP Chair and Vice-chair.

Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Report

None

Public Input

None

Program Owner Updates

Debbie Awalt announced she would be out of the office until mid-October and Sherri Sneed would be her replacement. She also advised everyone to check out the new IRS website which has been updated and improved.

Jackie Granger asked when the group would have an update on the recommendations submitted. Awalt said the response was due back from the IRS on September 17 and would be shared as soon as possible.

Status Update on Project – New Directions

Since the group has completed the referral form we can focus on the Refund Cycle Chart.

Karin Rice stated she could see the possibilities with the information provided on the pre-read discussion chart; however the IRS's viewpoint may question when it is too much information being given. She also stated the timeline of processing within 21 days was to keep people from having to calculate how long it could take for their return to be processed. Rice likes the idea, but isn't sure about approval from the IRS. She also recommended waiting until October when we have feedback from the recommendations.

Ellen Smiley suggested everyone look at the cycle chart provided as a pre-read to see if they could find a way to identify changes to allow better information about the processing timeline.

The group decided to continue on the current path and review the chart to see if anything can be changed or added.

Outreach

Lisa Wongshue mentioned she missed the last Outreach meeting but would be on the next one and would provide an update on the next Committee call.

Eileen Kelly talked about her experience attending the National Tax Forum in Chicago, IL. She passed out a lot of flyers and provided Smiley with the feedback / issues received.

Office Update

Smiley announced Kymberly Maine, TAP Secretary in Seattle, WA, had taken over the responsibilities that Annie Gold provided for the Milwaukee office. Gold took a new job in Houston, TX.

Closing/Meeting Adjourned

PK thanked everyone for their input and hard work.



Next Meeting: October 4, 2012, 2:00 p.m. ET / 1:00 p.m. CT / Noon MT / 11:00 a.m. PT

**Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Refund Processing Communications
Meeting Minutes
August 2, 2012**

Designated Federal Officer

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Officer |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------|
| • Kelly, Eileen | Wilmette, IL | Member |
| • Purkayastha, PK | Saline, MI | Chair |
| • Ralph, Thomas | Webster, MA | Member |

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| • Bekolo, Paulette | Chapel Hill, NC | Member |
| • Brandewie, Shaun | Akron, OH | Member |
| • Dell, Jack | Hayden, ID | Member |
| • Granger, Jackie | West Bend, WI | Member |
| • Kosanovich, Matt | Columbus, OH | Member |
| • Wongshue, Lisa | Orlando, FL | Vice Chair |

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Jimerson, Susan | Seattle, WA | Manager |
| • Smiley, Ellen | Milwaukee, WI | Primary Program Analyst |
| • Robb, Patti | Milwaukee, WI | Program Analyst |
| • Gabriel, Lisa | Milwaukee, WI | Program Analyst |

Program Owners/SMEs

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| • Awalt, Debbie | Lanham, MD | Program Analyst |
| • Rice, Karin | Atlanta, GA | Supervisory Public Affairs |

TAS and Systemic Advocacy

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Johnson, Barbara | Milwaukee, WI | Local Taxpayer Advocate |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|

Welcome/Opening

Committee Chair PK Purkayastha welcomed everyone. He commented on the work everyone has done to complete the referral. This is the earliest we have ever been able to send a referral up for Joint Committee review and he is extremely proud of the committee.

Joint Committee Report

PK advised he did not attend the Joint Committee face-to-face meeting, but Jack Dell attended instead. He explained the referral sailed through rather easily. There were two changes the Joint Committee asked for on the referral. One request was to change the wording from "third parties and software providers such as TurboTax" to "tax practitioners". The other change was to eliminate the Refund Processing Committee's recommendation

to change the refund cycle chart. PK wasn't thrilled with this suggested change and feels the project committee should continue to fight this battle. The panel members present agreed.

Susan Jimerson was at the Joint Committee face-to-face meeting and stated the committee members really did not care for the suggestion of eliminating the refund cycle chart.

PK understands this as many of those who make up the Joint Committee are tax practitioners. PK again reiterated we need to continue this battle.

Debbie Awalt confirmed that this recommendation was rejected by TAPs Joint Committee and not the IRS.

Ellen Smiley indicated the final referral has been forwarded to TAP Chair Eboni Moss for signature. It will be sent to the IRS through Deb'orah Momon-Townsend in the next few days.

PK also advised the Joint Committee has five ideas or buckets for project committees for 2013. Those committees are Toll Free, Communications, Tax Forms & Publications, TAC, and VITA.

DFO Report

Bill Wilde stated he liked the committee's suggestions. He suggests changing the refund cycle chart. Since the chart only addresses when your expected refund is, why not break the chart down into categories, such as if you filed an injured spouse request. PK liked the idea; maybe modifying it would be better.

Wilde added after reading through information provided by Wage & Investment (W&I) about the people calling the toll-free line, he was confused as one of the implications was taxpayers were calling that didn't give enough time for their returns to process. The information provided by W&I indicates the vast majority of calls were from people who waited outside the 21 days. The suggestions moving forward may not impact call volumes.

Awalt added IRS had a conference with tax software developers and the issue did come up about the refund cycle chart. The developers state the refund cycle chart is not working and IRS agrees but does not know the direction to go with it.

Karin Rice clarified the Joint Committee does not agree with the suggestion of eliminating the refund cycle chart, but the software developers are fine with IRS eliminating the chart.

PK noted once you take something away you do need to replace it with something.

Rice continued saying this committee discussed not only replacing the refund cycle chart with something else, whether it's a message or more information such as reasons that may

create delays, but to make sure everyone is saying the same thing. We all have to be on the same page. This has been stated frequently by this committee in the past few months.

Program Owner Updates

Awalt stated they are getting ready for next year's filing season. If everything goes as planned they are rolling out a new look to the www.irs.gov website at the end of August.

Smiley said she had a request from Jackie Granger asking if someone from the IRS who reviews the committee's referral could give feedback during one of the teleconference meetings before the end of the current member's term.

Some discussion took place as to the best time for this feedback. Awalt is considering the month of September.

Status Update on Project – New Directions

The committee will pursue the cycle chart suggested changes. Members will send emails to each other to get some ideas.

Subcommittees Current Activities

IRS Communications

Eileen Kelly is glad the project referral went through in pretty good shape and is looking forward to hearing back from the IRS.

Resetting Taxpayer Expectations

Continue to work on the new direction with the cycle chart.

Outreach

Kelly will be attending the Chicago Tax Forum this month.

Action Item: Smiley to send trifold self-mailers to Kelly.

Office Update

Jimerson advised they are finalizing the recommendations for new members and alternates being selected for 2013. The paper work will be delivered through the executive channels to Nina Olson.

The Joint Committee talked about having the project committees' face-to-face meetings moved up to December. This is in the works. The Joint Committee liked the idea of combining both the orientation and face-to-face meeting in one. Meeting with fellow panel members will set the stage for the year.

Closing

Meeting is adjourned. PK thanked everyone and looks forward to the continued work.

Next Meeting: September 6, 2012, 2:00 p.m. ET / 1:00 p.m. CT / Noon MT / 11:00 a.m. PT

**Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Refund Processing Communications
Meeting Minutes
July 12, 2012**

Designated Federal Officer

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Officer |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------|
| • Brandewie, Shaun | Akron, OH | Member |
| • Dell, Jack | Hayden, ID | Member |
| • Granger, Jackie | West Bend, WI | Member |
| • Kelly, Eileen | Wilmette, IL | Member |
| • Purkayastha, PK | Saline, MI | Chair |
| • Ralph, Thomas | Webster, MA | Member |

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| • Bekolo, Paulette | Chapel Hill, NC | Member |
| • Kosanovich, Matt | Columbus, OH | Member |
| • Wongshue, Lisa | Orlando, FL | Vice Chair |

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Jimerson, Susan | Seattle, WA | Manager |
| • Smiley, Ellen | Milwaukee, WI | Primary Program Analyst |
| • Robb, Patti | Milwaukee, WI | Program Analyst |
| • Gabriel, Lisa | Milwaukee, WI | Program Analyst |
| • Gold, Annie | Milwaukee, WI | Secretary |

Welcome/Opening

Committee Chair PK Purkayastha welcomed everyone.

Quorum met.

Joint Committee Report

PK asked if anyone had specific topics they thought should be covered during the virtual annual meeting. Eileen Kelly said they should go over what the Joint Committee (JC) expects to be included in the recommendations. Jackie Granger added they should include what the Quality Reviewers (QR) look for, too. Jack Dell stated the introduction to the program was lacking this year. He was caught short on what was expected of him and what he was supposed to be doing. The annual meeting should include an explanation of what the committees are expected to do. PK added we need to look at what would make the meeting work. Virtual training is only a one way meeting. New people need more information and it should be two way communications.

PK advised Dell will be attending the Joint Committee face-to-face meeting and to email him if you have other suggestions.

Susan Jimerson explained at the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) training last week one of the presenters gave a virtual presentation where you could ask questions, get answers, and give feedback. It was really interesting and useful so we are trying to adopt that interactive program and hope to have it available in December for the meeting.

DFO Report

Bill Wilde has been out of the office for a month so is still catching up on emails. If there has been an interim proposal shared with the committee, he asked if the email could be resent. Ellen Smiley will forward the referral to Wilde.

Public Input

None

Status Update on Project Referral

As a member of the QR committee all of the QR changes were recommended by Kelly. PK thinks this is a complete referral, but added this is just the beginning and we can keep working and come up with more recommendations. The members agreed by consensus to forward this recommendation to the JC for approval and elevation to the IRS.

PK said the WMR portion is covered, but there seems to be more than just WMR communication from the IRS. Dell thinks the WMR recommendations are right on point.

PK said according to the Contact Analytics information provided by the Subject Matter Experts, two percent of people call about their refunds and no return has been filed. Why do they call the IRS, what are they looking for? Should we be looking at other documentation? Jackie Granger said they call when they are looking for their money or if they have a problem. Maybe we could look at the marketing aspect and take the emphasis off of the seven day refund.

Dell thinks the committee did a quality job on this project. Granger would like feedback from the IRS people before the end of the year. Maybe they could join us on one of our phone calls to give feedback.

New Issues Assigned to the Committee

Ellen Smiley explained the Screening Committee referred these new TAP issues to our committee because some of the issues may be addressed by the recommendations this committee submits. If you don't think the issue falls under our topic, we can send the issue back to the screening committee. PK thinks all the issues were touched upon in our recommendations. Consensus to accept all of the issues.

Outreach

Please send your Outreach and Volunteer Hours Report to Smiley. Remember there are two tabs on the spreadsheet.

Face-to-Face Survey Responses

Overall the survey responses were good. It was confusing not to have the annual meeting, but we established camaraderie at the face-to-face meeting. Smiley said everyone worked hard and accomplished so much at the meeting but it would be great to have it much earlier in the year. Jimerson indicated the plan is to have the meetings in January.

Office Update

Jimerson thanked everyone for their help during the interview process. The interviews are completed and the recommendations have been forwarded to Rena Girinakis for her review and approval. Nine new member and 24 alternates have been recommended for TAP West. Next year we will be down to 74 total members.

Closing

PK advised the JC will review the issues on hold for new project ideas for next year, and then will sit down with Systemic Advocacy and IRS to determine what the final projects will be.

PK would still like to discuss other directions to take for the Refund Communications issue. He would like everyone to think about it and discuss it on the next call.

Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: August 2, 2012, 2:00 pm ET / 1:00 pm CT / Noon MT / 11:00 am PT

Introductions

Members and staff introduced themselves

Joint Committee Update

During their last conference call, the Joint Committee asked the Chairs to promote outreach. The Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP) can do what the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) cannot do – Outreach. PK asked everyone to collect suggestions and comments and be sure to turn in the outreach reports so Systemic Advocacy can see how much we are doing.

Susan Jimerson added that everyone needs to send their outreach reports each month when asked. Also, in order to be reimbursed for mileage and parking, please let us know before you do an outreach because we need to prepare a travel authorization before the travel is done.

Designated Federal Officer Report

Bill Wilde encouraged everyone to let him know if they have any questions or comments. Wilde has been a Local Taxpayer Advocate (LTA) for almost six years and enjoys his job.

Identity (ID) theft is a huge problem right now. The IRS sends out letters when this issue comes up; however, it's difficult to know what to say in the letter. Sometimes someone will "borrow" the social security number (SSN) to go to work but have no intention of filing a tax return using the SSN. Other times it's just a matter of theft. The system is broken and the process needs to be fixed. A taxpayer responds with information and it is not reviewed for up to six weeks. The taxpayer does not know that and the IRS just figures the information was not provided and they continue working the case as if the information was not received.

Terri Willert added undeliverable mail is also a problem. About 40 percent of the mail sent out is undeliverable and that number can reach 60 percent for international mail. Correspondence issues are exasperating.

Public Input

None

Refund Processing Communications Focus

Jerilyn Catoggio deals with a lot of the reporting, numbers, and volume. All the correspondence does get processed – eventually. However, as a taxpayer, one would like it processed quicker than four months. No one likes to see mail from the IRS and even though she is an employee she said her heart pounds a little bit when she gets something in the mail from the IRS.

ID theft is a tremendous problem. It is just exploding. Using a deceased taxpayer's SSN is a very hot topic right now. Congress is looking at the data availability and making some changes. The IRS really wants to fix the problem. We would like to find out where the

systemic problem is – how to tell if it is the real taxpayer or is it the person who stole their identity.

Paulette Bekolo asked when a taxpayer signs and sends their affidavit about identity theft, how long does it take for the IRS to respond? Catoggio responded it generally is acknowledged in 60 days. Wilde advised they should contact their Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) office if they do not receive an acknowledgement within that timeframe. Catoggio added the initial contact could take a couple months during the filing season. The thieves are very knowledgeable; therefore it takes a very long time to resolve an identity theft case.

Wilde said other agencies can slow things down as well. The Social Security Administration (SSA) receives information and if the SSN and the name don't match exactly but is close, they will change the name in the system. This causes huge problems. This happens about 2.5 million times a year. The SSA does not want to mail a letter out to these people to get the correct information.

Karin Rice works in the Communications & Liaisons (C&L) office of the IRS. When the IRS system was designed, they didn't think to cover the "worst" that comes out in people. We are working on improving the system but it is a very large project. She feels the climate is such that we have an opportunity to make significant changes in the way we approach sending out refunds. It used to be how fast we can get the refund sent out. Now we have to balance it with due diligence. We have to find the sweet spot between the speed and due diligence. We are calling it the refund eco system. What are the media, practitioners, and taxpayers saying? Our ability is enhanced due to social media. When we hear there is a problem reported out there, we have more tools to help us really identify it. Your input is very valuable to us! We want to get everything into alignment. There is a meeting with software vendors scheduled and the input from this TAP committee may help direct us.

PK said part of the problem is that the IRS never has a chance to stop everything and update their systems. Instead, they have to do patch jobs. And now the IRS is administering the social credits. There is a great deal of fraud in these programs.

Willert explained the IRS promoted faster refunds to entice people to e-file their returns. Now the taxpayer expects it instantly -- they want their refund in seven days.

Catoggio said 98 percent of the refunds are sent out timely and correctly. It's the other 2 percent that cause the problems. We answer 36 million calls every year. Our resources are limited. Sometimes one taxpayer will call one to two hundred times in a two week period to find out where their refund is. That tends to skew the statistics.

Bekolo thinks Where's My Refund (WMR) is a good tool, but not when the taxpayer is having a problem.

Jackie Granger stated the mentality of getting the refund instantly has to change.

Even some very intelligent people don't understand how taxes work. Financial planners need to help people financially plan. We need to educate the taxpayers so they keep their money throughout the year instead of getting large refunds.

PK thinks most of the problems and talk about refunds is from self-preparers, not from people who have their return prepared by a practitioner.

Eileen Kelly talked about the difficulty of collecting data but it sounds like there is an awful lot of information available. Is there a way to get our hands on the data we need?

Catoggio said most of the refunds have gone out and now IRS is working on the balance due returns. Phones are routed by application. Data can be pulled from specific lines to find out the general reason a taxpayer is calling. It depends on the filters used at that particular time. Contact analytics can review calls and pull specific phrases out of the messages. That is one way to identify trends.

Information/Goals

PK believes this is a frustration issue and there is a general mistrust of the IRS. Taxpayers repeatedly look at WMR and then make repeat phone calls to the IRS toll-free line. This is a diversion and waste of scarce resources. There is a mismatch between expectations and reality.

Catoggio said taxpayers who do reach IRS are satisfied or very satisfied; even if it's not the answer they were hoping for.

Many taxpayers think the IRS makes the laws; they don't realize that Congress makes the laws.

Catoggio explained the IRS also has to deal with last minute tax law changes. Congress has until December 31 to make changes, and then it takes the IRS two to three months to make changes in their systems; and this year there is a great deal of extenders to review. They are already saying nothing will be done until after the elections in November.

PK stated when a taxpayer e-files their return they are notified it has been accepted. This is generally interpreted to mean the IRS has processed the return and there were no problems. That is not the case. There is confusion between acknowledgement and accepted. Frequently when a taxpayer says return they really mean refund. The terms are treated as interchangeable but they are not.

PK further stated the IRS role should be processing returns. Taxpayers seem to use the IRS as a bank to get the large refunds each year.

Tactics to Consider:

- Decouple return processing from refund processing and issuance
- Set fixed schedule for WMR update
- Notify user of last encounter (i.e., you last visited this site...)

- Telephone operator alert to user of no new information
- Request user telephone contact for essentials only

Decoupling of Processes:

- Rename refund cycle chart to return processing cycle chart (include effects of overload); and
- Clearly delineate when return processing is complete and the start of refund management/issuance.
 - Return being processed; waiting confirmation; manual intervention, etc.;
 - Processing is complete, transferred to refund management; adjusting refund with prior claims; refund issued (paper, direct deposit, bonds, etc.); and
 - Special handling – direct deposit refused, etc.

Matt Kosanovich said he is confused about what we should be doing and asked if we should be looking at communications? PKs conclusion is to reduce the frustration level of taxpayers when trying to find out the status of their refund.

Rice said the Committee should look to identify the common denominators of third party messaging that may be causing taxpayer confusion. Are they getting mixed messages and saying different things? If you see something we can target to make a change, let us know. We would like to have this conversation with the organizations as soon as possible.

Subcommittee Report Out

IRS Communications

Eileen Kelly explained they went through the WMR screen shots. Some suggestions were relatively minor but it was good to go through them. Some of the screen shots have already been revised. It was very, very helpful to have input from both Rice and Catoggio.

Jackie Granger suggested a very simplified new landing page to alleviate calls. Specifically, their subcommittee suggests a visual timeline to help taxpayers know where their return is in the process. Granger added we will need to go through publications as well, so this will probably be an ongoing process.

We're looking at more of a strategic approach. How do we help alleviate phone calls to the IRS? Taxpayers should be able to find the status of their return when they go to the WMR landing page.

Third Party Communications

Kosanovich advised the subcommittee is working through what they want to address. The focus may be on communications from the IRS to third parties; to focus on the process the return goes through. The cycle chart should be eliminated or replaced with general information.

The group didn't get too far in specific discussions yet, but talked about how we need to complement what is said on the WMR screen shots. There needs to be a consistent

message across the board. The subcommittee cannot go a lot further because they need more information about who is actually calling. We need to know where the breakdown is before we can make recommendations.

Catoggio will look for more data and supply it. If the analysis has not been done yet, she will get as much as she can. There are several reports done on a yearly basis, but she is not sure exactly what is analyzed – what direction the IRS is coming from and what they are looking at. We may have it already but will need to do some research. ACTION: Catoggio to research and supply requested data.

Rice googled preparer websites to see what information they have. Maybe once you see what they have you may decide we don't need to address that specific area. H&R Block has a page for taxpayers to find out the status of their refund or return.

This issue is ongoing for the IRS and we are looking for input all the time. The basic team supporting this Committee will stay the same but members may change a little bit. We have a vested interest in this subject.

The message will stay the same but its possible more things may be identified. Nothing should change too drastically. Communication is where we want to see improvement and we need your ideas and the acknowledgment from you. We have an ongoing conversation and ask for input from the Internal Revenue Service Advisory Council (IRSAC), IRS Practitioner Advisory Council (IRPAC), and other organizations to obtain feedback as well.

PK advised the subcommittees will get together again on Friday and will finish their discussions. They can also start writing up their recommendations. It would be a good starting point and can be refined in the weeks to come.

Kelly said when they write up their referral, they will write their comments on the WMR screen shots. Catoggio asked that they use the status code at the top of the screen shot to ensure they can link it up to the comments. She is not sure exactly what has been revised at the moment. Word and / or whole sentence changes can be recommended.

Catoggio said she isn't sure how often changes are made to WMR, but she will check to see if there is a due date for the suggested changes and provide timeframes to TAP. ACTION: Catoggio will find out timeframe to submit changes for WMR.

Friday, May 25, 2012

Announcements/Discussions

Reminder there will not be a conference call in June to allow the subcommittees to work on their recommendations. The next call is scheduled for July 5 but due to the holiday, all members agreed to have the meeting on July 12 at 3 p.m. ET.

PK noted the focus for refunds is 7 to 21 days on the WMR website. When he looked at the Spanish version, it differed. It also said if you need more information call the IRS and it provided the phone number. He said there needs to be consistency. The languages need to say the same thing. He felt the paragraphs and sentences should provide the same information.

PK modified the IRS e-file refund cycle chart to say what he thought was specific information everyone needed to know. Make the change to focus on returns, not refunds.

Kosanovich said their subcommittee refocused. They are narrowing their scope and want their recommendations to be more generic.

Kelly stated her subcommittee has been working on generic comments to the WMR screen shots. Both subcommittees need to compare what they are working on so we don't send conflicting messages or overlap. Where it is possible, use return instead of refund. WMR should be Where's My Return – not Where's My Refund. She will do a first draft of their comments and recommendations and send it to the full committee for review.

PK thinks the IRS should not be providing any dates at all and if they do, the dates all need to be consistent.

Kosanovich said they are talking about being more general in follow-up dates. The cycle chart causes confusion.

Subcommittee Report Out

IRS Communications

Kelly advised the group looked at more screenshots. She will prepare a draft of all the comments and after review by the subcommittee, will share them with the full committee. This subcommittee will meet on June 27th to discuss everything. In the meantime, we will also be doing our own individual reviews.

Third Party Communications

Kosanovich stated they will work on a standard form that is associated with the return and will list all the processes and avenues the return goes through. The subcommittee is also going to look at the messages when a return is transmitted. What notification the taxpayer gets. The program owners will get information and statistical data for us. Kosanovich will write it up and send it out to everyone for review.



PK stated it would be best to have our information ready to send to the Joint Committee in time for their face-to-face meeting in July. Catoggio said the sooner the members can submit their recommendations, the better.

Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: July 12, 2012, at 3:00 p.m. ET / 2:00 p.m. CT / 1:00 p.m. MT / Noon PT

**Refund Processing Communications
Meeting Minutes
May 3, 2012**

Designated Federal Officer

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Officer |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| • Bekolo, Paulette | Chapel Hill, NC | Member |
| • Dell, Jack | Hayden, ID | Member |
| • Granger, Jackie | West Bend, WI | Member |
| • Kelly, Eileen | Wilmette, IL | Member |
| • Purkayastha, PK | Saline, MI | Chair |
| • Ralph, Thomas | Webster, MA | Member |
| • Wongshue, Lisa | Orlando, FL | Vice Chair |

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------|
| • Brandewie, Shaun | Akron, OH | Member |
| • Kosanovich, Matt | Columbus, OH | Member |

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| • Jimerson, Susan | Seattle, WA | Manager |
| • Smiley, Ellen | Milwaukee, WI | Primary Program Analyst |
| • Gabriel, Lisa | Milwaukee, WI | Assisting Program Analyst |
| • Kymberly Hand | Seattle, WA | Secretary |

Program Owners / SMEs

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| • Awalt, Debbie | Program Analyst |
| • Momon-Townsend, Deb'orah | Program Manager |
| • Rice, Karin | Program Manager |
| • Catoggio, Jerilyn | Policy Analyst |

Advocacy Assignments

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| • Willert, Terri | Senior Tax Analyst |
|------------------|--------------------|

Welcome/Opening

Committee Chair PK Purkayastha welcomed everyone.

Quorum met.

Chair Report

PK said the members had asked Debbie Awalt for more information on Where's My Refund (WMR) and she provided screen shots for their review. The members are also looking at materials from different tax companies like H&R Block and TurboTax in preparation for the face-to-face on May 24 – 25. The purpose is to identify a way for the

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to simplify the way taxpayers are notified about the status of their return.

As an example: UPS has a way to look for a package to see if it was shipped or picked up or to check on where the package is in the shipping process.

Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Report

Bill Wilde said he felt strongly about the issue this Project Committee is working on because the Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) filters a lot of phone calls from taxpayers trying to find the status of their refund.

Public Input

None

Subcommittee Current Activities and Next Actions

IRS Communications

Eileen Kelly said each member of the subcommittee would review the pre-read materials before the face-to-face meeting. She added she attended a TAS sponsored outreach event and several practitioners brought up the issue of communication.

Third Party Communications

The subcommittee has not moved very far on their portion but they have been reviewing individual websites for information provided to taxpayers that may be different than what the IRS stated.

Program Owner Comments

Debbie Awalt said Jerilyn Catoggio and Karin Rice would be attending the face-to-face meeting. She asked the members to think of questions and email them to Ellen Smiley prior to the meeting to allow them some time to gather the information/answers.

There was a group discussion about how the IRS was getting the message out via the WMR to taxpayers who either owed money or whose refund was still be processed. There would be further discussion at the Face-to-Face meeting regarding this topic. Smiley stated the group should recommend changing the name from "Where's My Refund" to "Where's My Return."

Awalt said the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applicants have been contacting the IRS to obtain transcripts to include with their FAFSA applications. Applicants who filed their 2011 taxes and have a balance due on their return have been unable to retrieve transcripts online or by telephone because the 2011 balance due returns do not post immediately. Catoggio said even though a taxpayer submitted their return it may still be in the processing stage so when they check WMR they receive a message that the IRS does not have any information on the refund. IRS asked FAFSA to accept copies of the applicant's tax return and they will be accepted until mid-July.

New Issues

Smiley said we have two new issues assigned to Committee. Issue 23551, *E-file: Software Changes Cause Refund Delays*, and Issue 22646, *Return Processing: Taxpayer to Know Return Status*. The screening committee felt they related to our project focus so reassigned them. In addition there are another five new issues she will bring to the face-to-face.

Face-to-Face Update

Smiley pointed out as the group comes up with recommendations they can send them to the IRS. You do not have to wait until all recommendations are completed.

Susan Jimerson informed everyone there is a shuttle service from the Milwaukee airport to the Residence Inn hotel in Milwaukee.

ACTION: Kymberly Hand will email hotel confirmations and shuttle information.

Outreach

Please remember to turn in your outreach reports each month.

Office Updates

Jimerson said beginning Monday, May 7, Tiffany Todoro, Local Taxpayer Advocate in Oakland, CA, will be the acting TAP Director for 90 days. Louis Morizio, who is currently acting Director, will return to his normal duty as TAP East Manager.

The recruiting period ended on April 27. Management will be ranking all the applications the week of May 7.

Jimerson added over 700 completed TAC Surveys were completed. Joint Committee Analyst Susan Gilbert is compiling the feedback and will share it with the members. She thanked everyone who participated.

Closing

Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: Face-to-Face meeting May 24 – 25, 2012 in Milwaukee, WI

**Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Refund Processing Communications
Meeting Minutes
April 5, 2012**

Designated Federal Official

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Official |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bekolo, Paulette • Brandewie, Shaun • Dell, Jack • Granger, Jackie • Kelly, Eileen • Kosanovich, Matt • Purkayastha, PK • Ralph, Thomas • Wongshue, Lisa | Chapel Hill, NC
Akron, OH
Hayden, ID
West Bend, WI
Wilmette, IL
Columbus, OH
Saline, MI
Webster, MA
Orlando, FL | Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Chair
Member
Vice Chair |
|--|---|---|

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jimerson, Susan • Smiley, Ellen • Robb, Patti • Gabriel, Lisa • Kymberly Hand | Seattle, WA
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI
Seattle, WA | Manager
Primary Program Analyst
Program Analyst
Assisting Program Analyst
Secretary |
|---|---|---|

Program Owners / SMEs

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awalt, Debbie • Momon-Townsend, Deb'orah | Program Analyst
Program Manager |
|---|------------------------------------|

Advocacy Assignments

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson, Barbara | Local Taxpayer Advocate |
|--|-------------------------|

Welcome/Opening

Committee Chair PK Purkayastha welcomed everyone and explained this meeting would be an administrative meeting as no Federal Register was filed.

Chair Report

Purkayastha complimented Eileen Kelly and Matt Kosanovich on their progress regarding their subcommittees.

DFO Report

Bill Wilde provided information on the latest developments with the IRS process for Identity Theft. He explained when a taxpayer e-files their tax return and it is rejected because the Social Security Number (SSN) has previously been used, the taxpayer receives a

statement indicating their SSN is associated with a deceased person or they are ineligible to e-file, but he said most taxpayers stop reading after seeing the deceased verbiage.

Action Item: Bill Wilde will send a copy of the message to Susan Jimerson.

Public Input

None

Subcommittees Current Activities and Next Actions

IRS Communications

Eileen Kelly provided a brief update on the subcommittee's progress. The first step is breaking down the amount of work. She asked Debbie Awalt if there are particular items the IRS wants TAP members to look at and review. Also, is there a particular way the IRS wants the recommendations presented.

Action Item: Awalt will check with Communications & Liaison and provide feedback to Smiley next week.

Jimerson said the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel has a format all project committees use for presenting recommendations; however the group can provide additional information with their recommendation.

Third Party Communications

Matt Kosanovich provided a brief update on the subcommittee's progress. He also explained he and Kelly did have a conversation regarding the similarities between the communication portions of the subcommittees when they created their outline for the two subcommittees. Kosanovich asked Awalt who are the third parties IRS wants TAP to review.

Action Item: Awalt will check with Communications & Liaison and provide feedback to Smiley next week. However, she also wants the group to look at what the public has submitted to TAP as issues because the taxpayers are the ones this will provide the best service to.

Awalt asked the members if they had heard any complaints or compliments from taxpayers about their refunds being quicker or later than expected.

Members provided their feedback and the response is mixed about the timeliness of receiving their tax refunds.

Several members voiced their opinion that state refunds had more of a delay than federal refunds.

Program Owner Comments

Awalt announced the IRS is currently working on an online application that would allow taxpayers who filed an amended return the ability to look up the status to see where the return was within the IRS process. She will provide additional information when available.

Awalt also advised the IRS has been updating information on IRS.gov to better serve taxpayers.

Action Item: Awalt will send Jimerson the presentation previously presented to the group.

Outreach

Lisa Wongshue advised the Outreach Committee suggested any member who is on Facebook should post something about TAP on their page or “like” the TAP Facebook page that was created by a former member. She also mentioned with recruitment in full swing, it would be a good opportunity to speak with different groups such as home owner associations or other volunteer groups.

Smiley reminded everyone while completing their outreach reports, the columns titled *Number of Issues* and *Primary Topic of Issues* are for use when an actual issue is received, not just topics of conversations. Please remember to submit the issue description to her so it can be added to the database.

Mentor/Mentee Update

Jackie Granger stated she and Jack Dell exchanged emails regarding different questions / information and have helped each other because they each had more experience in different areas.

Dell provided his opinion regarding the proposal of a virtual meeting, stating he felt the annual meeting is key for new members because it is their first experience with TAP and a way to get to know how the program is supposed to run. Dell strongly supports the annual meeting be attended by all TAP members as this is the only time everyone will actually see and talk to each other. Dell would also like the appropriate IRS staff to attend this meeting.

Kelly stated she had exchanged emails with Tom Ralph regarding some of his questions and reminded him that she was there if he had any additional questions.

Ralph stated he appreciated the help Kelly had provided so far.

Office Updates

Jimerson advised Annie Gold would be contacting members to update their credit card information for hotel arrangements for the face-to-face meeting.

Smiley added there will still be the conference call scheduled for May 3, 2012, as well as the face-to-face meeting in May. The June teleconference will not be held in order to allow members time to work on the subcommittee recommendations.



Closing

Meeting is adjourned.

Next Meeting: May 3, 2012 at 2:00 pm ET / 1:00 pm CT / Noon MT / 11:00 am PT

**Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Refund Processing Communication
Meeting Minutes
March 1, 2012**

Designated Federal Official

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Official |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bekolo, Paulette • Brandewie, Shaun • Granger, Jackie • Kelly, Eileen • Kosanovich, Matt • Purkayastha, PK • Ralph, Thomas | Chapel Hill, NC
Akron, OH
West Bend, WI
Wilmette, IL
Columbus, OH
Saline, MI
Webster, MA | Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Chair
Member |
|--|--|---|

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dell, Jack • Wongshue, Lisa | Hayden, ID
Orlando, FL | Member
Vice Chair |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jimerson, Susan • Smiley, Ellen • Robb, Patti • Gabriel, Lisa | Seattle, WA
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI | Manager
Primary Program Analyst
Program Analyst
Assisting Program Analyst |
|--|--|--|

Program Owners / SMEs

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awalt, Debbie • Momon-Townsend, Deb'orah | Program Analyst
Program Manager |
|---|------------------------------------|

Advocacy Assignments

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willert, Terri | Senior Tax Analyst |
|--|--------------------|

Welcome/Opening

Quorum met.

Committee Chair PK Purkayastha introduced the new TAP West Manager Susan Jimerson. Jimerson talked briefly about her past IRS experience.

Comments on Updated Refund Communications Slides

There were questions, comments, and discussion among panel members regarding the updated Refund Communication PowerPoint slides included as pre-reads.

Comments were made about resetting expectations for the taxpayer while minimizing the pressure on Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Operations. What is the percentage of taxpayers who are frustrated about not knowing the status of their refund? It is important for the committee to look at the content and means of the Where's My Refund (WMR) site and IRS2Go. IRS's goal is to get the taxpayer to use the website more instead of calling the IRS toll free number.

The second potential project calls for direct contact with taxpayers who had telephone conversations with the IRS to find out what caused the taxpayer to approach the IRS by telephone instead of using the WMR site. How would we communicate with taxpayers to find out what is going through their minds when they get frustrated and contact the IRS.

A suggestion was to set up a survey and send it out to all of the panel members. Or ask the practitioners on the panel how it has affected their clients. These same questions could be asked during outreach events as well. However, going to outreach events or asking other panel members is not going to guarantee a very high number of people who actually fall into this category.

The only way the panel would successfully do this second project is if somebody at the IRS gives the members a list of taxpayers who had phone contacts with the IRS. Bill Wilde stated the Service would not be able to provide a list of taxpayers for the panel to survey. The members understand this is a block in getting the information they need and are aware they need to find another way to obtain it.

Approve Minutes

February minutes are approved.

DFO Report (Bill Wilde)

The Local Taxpayer Advocates (LTAs) from around the country met in Washington D.C. in December to deliver the Annual Report to Congress. The congressional staffers were concerned with service to taxpayers with the federal budget cuts across the country. There are questions about the ability of IRS to deliver the service the taxpayers need due to the budget cuts. The Taxpayer Assistance Centers (TAC) will have limited return preparation for taxpayers and will no longer take paper returns from paid professionals. The IRS has a goal this year of trying to service three out of five calls from taxpayers. This is why this project committee's focus is important to come up with ideas to diminish the refund calls from taxpayers so resources can be put to better use. This is a good project.

Proposed Screen Changes for WMR (Debbie Awalt)

Debbie Awalt noted the overall screen changes were removing the toll free number to call to check on the refund. The taxpayer will not get any more information than listed on the WMR site.

A suggestion was made to have the WMR site inform the taxpayer the last time they accessed their account and stating nothing has changed or list the last time the site was updated, much like when one accesses their bank account information. Also indicate the

information is updated every 24 hours and show when the account was updated within the last 24 hours.

The WMR slides only show the one's changed. There is a list of all the status codes to show what information is available on WMR.

ACTION ITEM: Smiley will email the panel members the list of status codes and what they mean.

ACTION ITEM: Awalt will have more information on how they are testing WMR next week and will send it to Smiley for distribution.

A member brought up a recent incident regarding WMR; when accessed the first time it stated refund expected to arrive in about eight days. When accessed a second time the next day, the information advised the refund can be expected to arrive in three weeks.

Awalt noted if there are any other incidents such as this or any feedback, let Smiley know and she can forward the comments.

Another comment about the WMR slides is the strong language used. The sentence reads "If you file a complete and accurate tax return your refund will be issued within six weeks of the received date". This is a strong authoritative statement which doesn't leave wiggle room for problems or complications the IRS may have. Words like "will" and "shall" should not be used.

Awalt appreciated the feedback.

Project Discussion / Determine Next Steps

- **Brainstorm – Categories**

Panel members discussed the slides for the first Potential Project and second Potential Project and decided the first Potential project can be broken up into two segments.

The second Potential Project could be accomplished by partnering with the LTAs to have their case workers survey taxpayers who are experiencing refund delays.

One suggestion was to partner with Stakeholder Partnership, Education & Communication (SPEC) since they deal with taxpayers and they do not have to tell us names, but tell us about taxpayer experiences. However, such volunteers are usually dealing with the beginning of the process and not the refund stage.

Maybe a check box survey for IRS toll-free employees to complete when a caller is upset about their refund delay would help us better understand who is calling and why. Program Owners noted this may become a union issue with the employees and would have to be accepted by executives.

Another suggestion is to look to the tax preparation communities such as H&R Block and Liberty Tax to see the messages used and what could work better.

The program owners advised there is software used called 'Contact Analytics' that tapes the conversations on the toll-free lines and translates it to text. Searches can be done about specific topics.

Awalt noted while IRS is looking internally for answers, she believes TAP can bring a great outside perspective.

- **Form Subcommittees and Identify Leaders**

IRS Communications: Such as WMR, YouTube, Twitter, News Releases, etc.

Members: Eileen Kelly (lead), Jackie Granger, Jack Dell, and Lisa Wongshue.

Third Party Communications: Such as Community Boards, Tax Professionals, etc.

Members: Matt Kosanovich (lead), Thomas Ralph, PK, Paulette Bekolo, and Shawn Brandewie.

PK will work with Kelly and Kosanovich to write up the purpose and details for each subcommittee.

Office Updates

- **Mentoring**

Management agreed to have a segment on the agenda for mentoring in order to keep in touch with new members to make sure they are getting what they need from their mentors or anything else they would like to discuss.

- **New Outreach and Volunteer Hours Reporting Form**

This is a new updated form to report outreach and volunteer hours. The outreach hours will automatically populate to the volunteer hours reporting form. This will be the only outreach form used in the future. It would be appreciated if everyone could fill in their hours and outreach on a monthly basis and turn it in to your analyst. Staff asks each member to go back and record volunteer hours for the past few months and keep track on a regular monthly basis.

ACTION ITEM: Within the next few weeks Smiley will update the reporting form for the members who have completed outreach through February and email the report to the member.

The face-to-face meeting is scheduled for May 23 to 25. The location will be finalized next week.

Outreach

A member asked if there is a budget to place the Public Service Announcement (PSA) provided by the TAP Vice Chair in newspapers. It was confirmed there is no budget for this.



Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: April 5, 2012 at 2:00 pm ET / 1:00 pm CT / noon MT / 11:00 am PC

**Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Refund Processing Communication Project Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2012**

Designated Federal Official

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Official |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandewie, Shaun • Dell, Jack • Granger, Jackie • Kelly, Eileen • Kosanovich, Matt • Purkayastha, PK • Ralph, Thomas • Wongshue, Lisa | Akron, OH
Hayden, ID
West Bend, WI
Wilmette, IL
Columbus, OH
Saline, MI
Webster, MA
Orlando, FL | Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Chair
Member
Vice Chair |
|--|--|---|

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bekolo, Paulette | Chapel Hill, NC | Member |
|--|-----------------|--------|

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivera, Linda • Smiley, Ellen • Robb, Patti • Gabriel, Lisa • Gold, Annie | Washington, DC
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI | Acting Manager
Primary Program Analyst
Program Analyst
Assisting Program Analyst
Secretary |
|---|--|--|

Program Owners / SMEs

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awalt, Debbie • Momon-Townsend, Deb'orah • Catoggio, Jerilyn • Evans, Liz | Program Analyst
Program Manager
Policy Analyst
Public Affairs Specialist |
|--|---|

Advocacy Assignments

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willert, Terri | Senior Tax Analyst |
|--|--------------------|

Welcome/Opening

PK welcomed everyone to the second project committee meeting.

Chair Report

PK advised the committee chairs had their first Joint Committee call and had chair training. TAP Chair Eboni Moss and TAP Vice Chair Jackie Rollins are very enthusiastic. There was discussion on telephone etiquette such as being on time for the calls, showing respect for each other, and always reaching consensus.

DFO Report

Bill Wilde said he just watched the National Taxpayer Advocate (NTA) Interactive Video Teleconference (IVT) discussing her Annual Report to Congress (ARC). The Filing season is in full swing. Inventories are increasing but there are no new problems like the First Time Home Buyer Credit or stimulus payment and the problems they cause. Staffing is down in the TACs; therefore they will no longer schedule appointments for tax return preparation. It will now be on a first come first serve basis. Also, tax professionals will no longer be allowed to drop off tax returns at the TACs.

Program Owner and SME Introductions

- Debbie Awalt is a Customer Account Service (CAS) Program Analyst for Wage & Investment (W&I).
- Deb'orah Momom-Townsend is a CAS Program Manager for W&I
- Jerilyn Catoggio is a CAS Program Analyst for W&I

Karin Rice is the contact person through Communications Liaison but was not able to attend the call. Liz Evans may join the call later and she also works in Communications Liaison.

Catoggio went through the PowerPoint presentation provided in the pre-reads. Catoggio said the goal is to improve IRS communication regarding refunds given the limited budget and staff. Any changes would most likely not take effect until the 2013 filing season, however if anything is identified that can be fixed immediately, please send it.

We need to present the right messages to the right people – internally and externally and reset the expectations taxpayers have regarding refunds. We try to ensure taxpayers get their refunds as quickly as possible. Now we need to set one standard where the same time frame is given by the IRS, practitioners, and banks. We need to balance the message of faster refunds with a need to delay some refunds for legitimate compliance reasons. We need to minimize unnecessary pressure on IRS operations by preserving customer service resources for the most effective and efficient application.

There is a communication team that has taken small steps to make changes in refund communication, but they have no way to measure the taxpayers view. TAP has the ability to get that information from taxpayers, practitioners, and banks.

What leads taxpayers to call about their refund? What steps did they take before calling the IRS? How long after the expected refund date did the taxpayer wait to call the IRS? We want to reduce the number of refund related calls to the toll-free number. The methodology is left up to the TAP team.

One of the ideas the Communications Team is looking at is emphasize the date the refund is issued rather than the date the taxpayer will receive the refund. We want to ensure the communications are clear and not misleading. We will supply TAP with the messages we are getting out. Also, the Where's My Refund slides that are currently being revised will be provided to TAP.

PK said the presentation was done well and thanked Catoggio. PK said our task is to study the messages and study taxpayer's behavior. Why do people go to the phone and not use the online system. How can we build confidence in the online systems?

Shaun Brandewie added at the beginning of the presentation he heard two things. First, we want to get a consistent message to the taxpayers; how can we provide information to the taxpayer so they get a reliable message as to where their refund is. On the second point, IRS already has a tool in place that people know how to access that includes a list of the statuses a refund can be in. What he thinks would work is simply to provide in the current interface more granularities what status their return is in: return received, check for errors, duplicate information, duplicate filings, etc. If the taxpayer could check online to track the status of their refund similar to the online system UPS uses, it would reduce the number of calls. Very few people call UPS to find out where their package is because they get all the information they need online.

Catoggio said step-by-step tracking is a good system to consider but we are not at the point to implement it yet, but are not ruling it out for the future.

Terri Willert said there are some systemic limitations. Undeliverable mail is something we are looking at. There are some systemic changes that are surmountable.

Jackie Granger stated the problem should be looked at from the top down. There is too much emphasis on the refund. Emphasis should be your refund will be given to you when your return is processed. Eliminate the refund language.

Liz Evans added we have created the refund frenzy. It started because we wanted to encourage people to efile. Now we are trying to temper the language and expectations so people are not so focused on the refund.

Smiley said all are making valid points and suggestions. PK added we will discuss a bit more among ourselves.

Outreach

Lisa Wongshue said an outreach template was emailed to all prior to the meeting. Everyone should begin to use this template to report outreach. Wongshue advised the Chair of the Outreach Committee, Jackie Rollins, is having their first conference call this afternoon. The information from the meeting will be shared at the March meeting. PK advised outreach can be done in many ways: one-on-one, friendly dinners, club meeting, etc. It doesn't have to be a group setting or seminar.

Office Updates

Linda Rivera thanked everyone for joining the call. The face-to-face meeting is scheduled for May 23 – 25 and Chicago may be the location but is not finalized at this time. As soon as we have additional information, we will let you know.



With your help, TAP is starting to track volunteer hours for three reasons: 1) for the presidential certificate and award, 2) due to decrease in number of committees, we need an accurate estimate of volunteer hours when recruiting, and 3) the number of volunteer hours should be included in the annual report. We need your outreach hours reported on the new outreach report as well.

Rivera expressed her appreciation to everyone as her detail as the TAP Manager for this project committee will end soon. The new manager is Susan Jimerson and she will start at the end February.

Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: Thursday March 1, 2012 at 2:00 pm ET / 1:00 pm CT / noon MT / 11:00 am PC

**Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Refund Processing Communication Project Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 3, 2012**

Designated Federal Official

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilde, Bill | Little Rock, AR | Designated Federal Official |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|

Committee Members Present

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandewie, Shaun • Dell, Jack • Granger, Jackie • Kelly, Eileen • Kosanovich Matt • Purkayastha, PK • Ralph, Thomas • Wongshue, Lisa | Akron, OH
Hayden, ID
West Bend, WI
Wilmette, IL
Columbus, OH
Saline, MI
Webster, MA
Orlando, FL | Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member |
|---|--|--|

Members Absent

- | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bekolo, Paulette | Chapel Hill, NC | Member |
|--|-----------------|--------|

TAP Staff

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collins, Shawn • Rivera, Linda • Smiley, Ellen • Gabriel, Lisa • Gold, Annie | Washington DC
Seattle, WA
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee, WI | TAP Director
Acting Manager
Program Analyst
Assisting Program Analyst
Secretary |
|--|---|---|

Welcome/Opening (Wilde)

Bill Wilde welcomed everyone to the project committee meeting. Shawn Collins also welcomed the members and expressed her appreciation for their commitment to TAP. A special welcome to our new members Jack Dell and Thomas Ralph. A reminder to the new members; there are mentors and the staff available to assist in any way.

Congratulations to PK on his selection as Chair and to Lisa Wongshue on her selection as Vice Chair. To the returning members, you are appreciated for all you have done in the past and your continued efforts as we move forward within TAP. A new part of TAP is the outreach. Members are encouraged to be conscious of grass root issues when doing outreach as they may be the topic of future project committees. If there should be any problems or concerns, Collins door is always open for discussions.

Public/Media Input

None

Program Owner

Ellen Smiley informed the committee Debra Awalt is not able to attend this call. Awalt is the Program Owner for a few of the TAP Project Committees and another committee call is scheduled at the same time.

History

PK provided a brief overview and history of the issue. A subcommittee of Area 4 worked on this issue in the past. After discussing the issue among the members and several Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), one problem is the meaning of the word “accepted”. To H&R Block and Turbo Tax, it means the return is accepted. To the IRS, this means the return is accepted for processing. It has nothing to do with when the refund would be issued. The project proposal is focusing on the communication problem. We need to determine the scope of the problem, the size of the population we are trying to help, and if we should help everyone. A number of taxpayers are due a refund, but maybe taxpayers who do not receive a refund would need to know the status of their tax return. We need to determine as a team with TAP and IRS what kind of communication there should be.

Conference call time

The committee agreed to change the conference calls to the first Thursday of every month at 2:00 pm ET / 1:00 pm CT / noon MT / 11:00 am PT.

Smiley asked if everyone had a chance to go through the project proposal and pre-reads, and if there were any questions. Jack Dell expressed appreciation for the *Return Processing Overview* presentation.

One question asked how much money is available for the project. Smiley explained when Awalt was asked what the IRS did not like about the recommendations in the prior issue, the response was there was no funding for changing *Where's My Refund*. How costly is it and can we afford it? This is a question for Awalt. PK stated the next call is a month away and we need to obtain some information from the program owners in order to focus our committee. Smiley advised the members to forward their questions to her and she will contact the program owners to obtain answers and set up and administrative to call to discuss them. PK said Awalt can share the boundaries for the committee.

This project may overlap with the Return Processing Delays committee. Smiley and Janice Spinks will have to discuss and work those issues together.

PK asked about the clients who have no refund coming. How do they know what is happening with their return?

Shaun Brandewie directed a question to Collins and said the committee last year met with SMEs, while working on Issue 18611, and found out there are a couple of steps once a return has been "accepted" but before a refund is released. The existing links between IRS database systems make it impossible to provide feedback to the taxpayer or return originator when these steps delay the refund. TAP Issue 18611 suggested the IRS

improve the WMR status with the addition of "accepted", "authorized", and "released" status to better inform the taxpayer. IRS rejected this issue primarily because of cost.

With the current IRS budget limitations and this issue already having been denied, why are there two committees looking at such similar topics - Refund Processing Communication and Return Processing Delays. If returns are delayed, but the taxpayer is informed as to this delay, wouldn't both committees' efforts be moot? If there are insufficient funds to make the changes, are there more effective tasks on which these two committees could focus until funding becomes available? Shawn Collins said she thinks the program owners who agreed to have this project still wanted this project to be worked. Even though there is a budget and cost there is probably another angle to it. The program owner is the best person to ask these questions.

Brandewie asked if Smiley would contact Awalt and send out a notice for everyone to attend a conference call and discuss the questions prior to the next meeting. Smiley agreed to contact Awalt. Rivera said we will make sure we set up a call with Awalt and let everyone know when it will be scheduled.

Outreach

There was no Outreach reported for December, therefore no Outreach Report to provide.

Rivera said members should be available for outreach opportunities throughout the year. Members will need to get clearance prior to attending the outreach to make sure there are funds available for mileage reimbursement.

Wongshue asked what is expected of her as outreach coordinator. Smiley asked Rivera if the outreach coordinators will be having a conference call to discuss expectations. Information will be shared on setting up a call for this committee. Rivera will check and advise Smiley. The Outreach Presentation by Harlan Barnett is not yet available on TAPSpace, and a DVD of the presentation will be mailed to the members soon. Once the DVD mailing has been confirmed Smiley will notify the members.

Office Updates

The budget has not been approved for the face-to-face meeting yet, but we do need to discuss possible dates. Smiley will send an email with proposed date. All face-to-face meeting are subject to budget and it may turn out we will have to utilize a federal facility.

The Milwaukee staff now falls under the Seattle office and a permanent manager will be selected soon. We will let members know when the manager is selected.

PK asked the member to please try and join in on every meeting and let Smiley know if you cannot attend.

Wilde closed the meeting and stated he is looking forward to the meeting next month.



Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: Thursday February 2, 2012 at 2:00 pm ET / 1:00 pm CT / noon MT / 11:00 am PC