



# EX-IRS CONTRACTOR GETS FIVE YEARS IN PRISON FOR LEAK OF TAX RETURN INFORMATION OF TRUMP, RICH PEOPLE - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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A former contractor for the Internal Revenue Service who pleaded guilty to leaking tax information to news outlets about former President Donald Trump and thousands of the country's wealthiest people was sentenced to five years in prison Monday.

Charles Edward Littlejohn, 38, of Washington, D.C., gave data to The New York Times and ProPublica between 2018 and 2020 in leaks that appeared to be "unparalleled in the IRS's history," prosecutors said.

U.S. District Judge Ana Reyes imposed the maximum sentence, saying the crime targeted the nation's system of government and its democracy.

"When you target the sitting president of the United States, you target the office," she said. "It can not be open season on our elected officials."

Littlejohn apologized and said he alone bears responsibility. "I acted out of a sincere, if misguided, belief I was serving the public interest," he said. "My actions undermined the fragile trust we place in government."

Defense attorney Lisa Manning argued for a lower sentence in line with typical guidelines for someone without a criminal record. But Reyes pushed back saying said the crime was extraordinary and the sentence must "deter others who might feel an obligation to break the law."

Reyes, who questioned why Littlejohn faced a single felony count of unauthorized disclosure of tax returns and return information, also imposed three years of supervised release and a \$5,000 fine.

Republican Sen. Rick Scott of Florida said he was among those whose tax information was leaked by Littlejohn. The possibility it could be published affects his entire family, he said, arguing that Littlejohn should have faced additional criminal charges from the Justice Department for exposing personal information "just to harm people."

Littlejohn had applied to work at the contactor to get Trump's tax returns and carefully figured out how to search and extract tax data to avoid triggering suspicions internally, prosecutors said in court documents.

Prosecutors had pushed for the five-year sentence, which is among the longest sentences handed down in a leak investigation, according to the Justice Department. Nicole Argentieri, acting assistant attorney general of the department's criminal division, said the sentence "sends a strong message that those who violate laws intended to protect sensitive tax information will face significant punishment."

Prosecutors did not name Trump or the outlets in charging documents, but the description and time frame align with stories about Trump's tax returns in The New York Times and reporting about wealthy Americans' taxes in the nonprofit investigative journalism organization ProPublica.

The 2020 New York Times report found Trump, who had broken with tradition and refused to voluntarily release his tax returns, paid \$750 in federal income tax the year he entered the White House and no income tax at all some years thanks to colossal losses. Six years of his returns were later released by the then-Democratically controlled House Ways and Means Committee.

ProPublica, meanwhile, reported in 2021 on a trove of tax-return data about the wealthiest Americans. It found the 25 richest people legally pay a smaller share of their income in taxes than many ordinary workers do.

Both publications have declined to comment on the charges, and ProPublica reporters previously said they didn't know the identity of the source. The stories sparked calls for reform on taxes for the wealthy — and calls for investigations into the leaking of tax information, which has specific legal protections.

The IRS has said any disclosure of taxpayer information is unacceptable and the agency has since tightened security.