

## News

# Senator Doug Jones Asks IRS to Explain Disproportionate Auditing of Minorities

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U.S. Senator Doug Jones (D-Ala.) has sent a letter to Commissioner Charles Rettig of the Internal Revenue Service calling for answers about a recent report that revealed that African Americans are audited by the IRS more than any other group.

Jones also noted a report that showed people in more rural, low-income areas of the country were being audited at disproportionately high rates.

Further, a study of recent audit data suggested that taxpayers in nearly every county in Alabama

were audited at a rate higher than the national average, and the rate was even higher in areas of the Black Belt.

"To concentrate so exclusively on this subset of taxpayers defies explanation," Jones wrote in the April 4 letter to the IRS.

"For example, in Greene County, Alabama (population, 8,330), with a median household income of less than \$21,000, it appears that taxpayers are audited over 40 percent more often than the national average, including areas that are much more urban and wealthy," he said.

"For comparison, Bergen County, New Jersey, with a median population of nearly 1 million residents, and a median

household income of over \$90,000, has an audit rate that matches the national average," Jones said.

In his letter, Jones called it no anomaly. The chances of an IRS audit seem to correlate nearly exactly with the taxpayer's proximity to either the rural Southeast or, in several stark cases, to Native American reservations.

According to IRS statistics, the annual "tax gap," or the gross gap between total taxes owed and total taxes paid on time was over \$450 billion.

"To take such a large portion of limited IRS resources and to focus them so intensely on rural communities in Alabama and the Southeast makes little fiscal sense.

Moreover, the practice appears to be blatantly discriminatory," he said.

In an effort to focus its resources and ensure fair treatment of all taxpayers, Jones said he believes the IRS should undertake a full and thorough review of the policies and practices that led to such a disparate geographic impact of its annual audits.

"Given the overwhelming focus on my constituents in the state of Alabama, I would request you respond to the following questions:

Does the IRS have any official policy dictating that low-income or rural geographic areas be subjected to increased audit rates?

Does the IRS, in any manner, consider the taxpayer's address in determining whether to conduct an audit?

Has the IRS conducted a study or analysis on the fiscal impact of



PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

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its current practice of geographically concentrating audits versus the fiscal impact of a system that resulted in more evenly dispersed audits?

Similarly, has the IRS conducted a study or analysis on the fiscal impact of its current practice concentrating audits in low-income and rural communities versus the fiscal impact of a system that resulted in audits being conducted in geo-

graphic proportion to the amount of expected tax revenue?

Has the IRS conducted a study or analysis on the impact of increasing pre-filing education or tax filing assistance in the communities currently oversampled for tax audits, and the effect this education or filing assistance may have on reducing employee hours spent on subsequent audits?

## Kenya's Cherono Wins Men's Boston Marathon in Sprint to Tape

Lawrence Cherono finished Monday race in 2 hours, 7 minutes, 57 seconds

By Jimmy Golen  
AP Sports Writer

BOSTON — The two-time Boston Marathon champion turned onto Boylston Street with a sliver of a lead, leaning in front of two others with the finish line in sight.

But one of them was Lawrence Cherono, the fastest man in the field.

And he needed every bit of his speed.

Cherono outkicked Lelisa Desisa and passed him just steps away from the tape, winning the 123rd Boston Marathon in 2 hours, 7 minutes 57 seconds on Monday to claim his first major victory.

Desisa, the Ethiopian who won the 2013 race that was marred by the finish line bombing and claimed a second victory in '15, eased up after realizing he was beaten and finished 2 seconds back. Kenneth Kipkemoi was third, another 8 seconds behind, one of seven Kenyans in the top 10.

Worknesh Degefa broke away from defending champion Des Linden and the rest of the women's pack in the Framingham flats and ran alone for the last 20 miles to her first major marathon victory.

The 28-year-old Ethiopian finished in 2:23:31 to become the eighth Ethiopian woman to win the race and the third in seven years. Kenya's Edna Kiplagat was second, American Jordan Hasay was third and Linden was fifth.

One year after an icy rain and a near-gale headwind resulted in the

slowest winning times in four decades, race organizers again prepared for the foul New England weather. But overnight thunderstorms moved on before the runners left Hopkinton; the sun even made an appearance about halfway through.

Linden took advantage of last year's storm to splash her way to the first win for an American woman since 1985.

But with conditions back to normal, so were the results: East Africans from Kenya and Ethiopia dominating the podiums.

A field of 30,000 runners followed the elites, ditching their trash bags and ponchos on the Hopkinton Green before embarking on the 26.2-mile trek from Hopkinton to Copley Square. It's the first time the race has been run on April 15 since the 2013 attacks; officials planned a ceremony at 2:49 p.m. to honor those killed or maimed by the two pressure cooker bombs that exploded near the finish line.

Daniel Romanchuk, 20, became the youngest-ever men's wheelchair champion in Boston. He finished in 1:21:36 for the fastest time ever for an American.

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