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National Taxpayer Advocate Issues Annual Fiscal Year Objectives Report to Congress

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WASHINGTON — In an annual report to Congress, National Taxpayer Advocate Nina E. Olson outlined her objectives for the Office of the Taxpayer Advocate for the coming fiscal year.

The Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) has a dual mission to assist taxpayers in resolving problems with the IRS and to make administrative and legislative recommendations to mitigate those problems. "The Office of the Taxpayer Advocate will continue to partner with the IRS to resolve taxpayer problems, and ensure taxpayer rights and concerns are considered and protected during IRS program implementation," said Olson.

In the annual Fiscal Year Objectives report, which is required by law, Olson reviews the accomplishments of her office during the current fiscal year and describes its focus and goals for the coming fiscal year.

In fiscal year 2003 the Office of the Taxpayer Advocate worked with the IRS on several initiatives, including Earned Income Tax Credit certification, Offers-in-Compromise, Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers, the Federal Payment Levy program, Collection Due Process hearings, and the implementation of the National Research Project. The report describes how TAS will continue to focus on these programs for the next fiscal year.

The report identifies several new projects for fiscal year 2004 involving small business issues, electronic filing, and financial literacy. The Office of the Taxpayer Advocate is also sponsoring or participating in several research studies involving abusive tax schemes, the impact of representation on the outcome of EITC audits, and the reasons for lack of taxpayer response in EITC examinations.

"A true partnership between TAS and the rest of the IRS in the planning and implementation of programs, reduces the risk of delivering programs that meet taxpayer resistance or that must be substantially reworked after implementation," Olson said.

To review the report in its entirety, visit the IRS Web site at http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-utl/nta_fy04_objrpt.pdf.

In conjunction with her Annual Report, the National Taxpayer Advocate is also issuing a study that she commissioned on the role of ombudsmen in federal agencies. Advocates and ombudsmen play an important role in an increasing number of federal agencies and departments. The study details how these offices interact with various agencies and the importance of independence in achieving their mission. This report, *Agencies Within Agencies: A Survey of Federal Agency External Ombudsmen*, will be available by calling 1-800-829-3676 and requesting Publication Number 4213.

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