

Grassley, Baucus Urge Ministries to Cooperate

Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., chairman of the Committee on Finance, and Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, ranking member, have written to several religious ministries to urge cooperation with an earlier information request from Grassley.

The ministry inquiry that Grassley launched last November is meant to gauge the effectiveness of certain tax-exempt policies.

"This ought to clear up any misunderstanding about our interest and the committee's role," Grassley said. "We have an obligation to oversee how the tax laws are working for both tax-exempt organizations and taxpayers. Just like with reviews of other tax-exempt organizations in recent years, I look forward to the cooperation of these ministries in the weeks and months ahead."

Grassley wrote to six ministries in November, asking a series of questions on the nonprofit organizations' expenses, treatment of donations and business practices. The questions were based on presentations of material from watchdog groups and whistleblowers and on investigative reports in local media outlets.

One of the six ministries, Joyce Meyer Ministries of Fenton, Mo., has cooperated substantially with his request and provided the requested information. Benny Hinn Ministries of Grapevine, Texas, has indicated a willingness to cooperate and provided answers to five of the 28 questions so far. Representatives for Randy and Paula White of Without Walls International Church/Paula White Ministries, Tampa, Fla., have verbally indicated to Finance Committee staff that they would cooperate.

The remaining ministries have not cooperated, citing privacy protections or questioning the committee's standing to request the information. Baucus and Grassley wrote to them on March 11 to describe the committee's jurisdiction and role in determining the effectiveness of tax policy developed by the committee, distinct from the Internal Revenue Service's role, which is to enforce existing law.

The three ministries are: Kenneth and Gloria Copeland of Kenneth Copeland Ministries, Newark, Texas; Creflo and Taffi Dollar of World Changers Church International/Creflo Dollar Ministries, College Park, Ga.; and Eddie L. Long of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church/Eddie L. Long Ministries, Lithonia, Ga.