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IRS Spending Bill Would Bar Warrantless E-Mail Searches.

The IRS would be prohibited from accessing private e-mails or other electronic communications without a warrant under a provision added to the agency's annual spending bill July 17.

House Appropriations Committee member Kevin Yoder, R-Kan., added the language as an amendment during the committee's markup of the House's fiscal 2014 financial services and general government spending package . The provision would apply to other departments and agencies under the bill's jurisdiction, including the Treasury Department and the SEC. The amendment was approved by voice vote.

The American Civil Liberties Union in April alleged that the IRS, lacking a definitive policy on taxpayers' e-mail privacy, has permitted its employees to obtain e-mails and other communications stored on Internet service providers' servers without a warrant if the e-mails were more than 180 days old. The ACLU said the IRS's practice was based on "hopelessly outdated" law and could put the agency in violation of the Fourth Amendment.

The spending package would cut IRS funds by 24 percent. A date has not been set for its consideration by the full House.