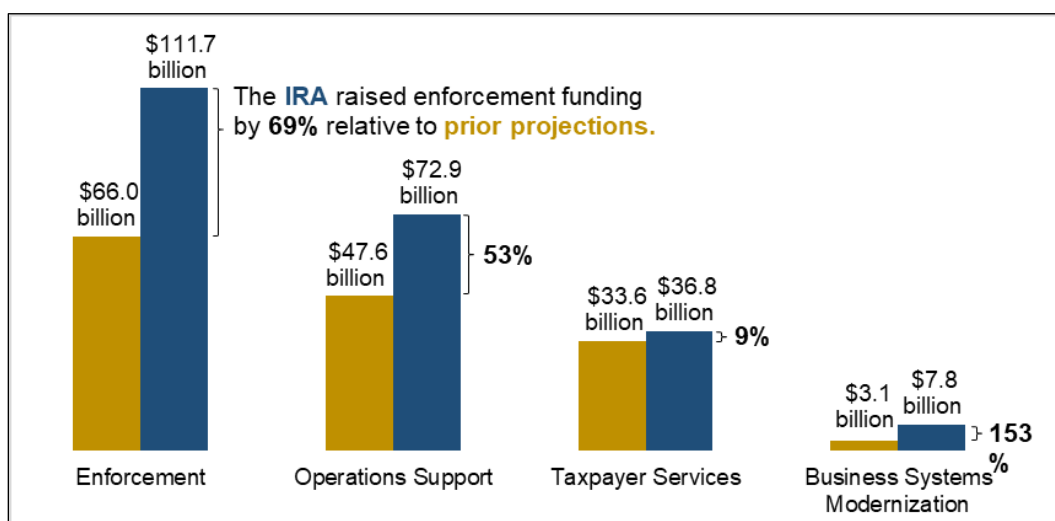


# IRS-Related Funding in the Inflation Reduction Act

Updated October 20, 2022

Part 3 of Title I, Subtitle A of P.L. 117-169, commonly referred to as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), appropriated to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and related agencies a total of \$79.6 billion to remain available through the end of FY2031 to bolster taxpayer services and enforcement of the tax code, among other purposes. The law intended this new spending to supplement, not replace, the IRS's normal annual appropriations (see **Figure 1**).

**Figure 1. The IRS's Budget Authority Through FY2031 Under the Inflation Reduction Act**



**Source:** Congressional Budget Office; Part 3 of Title I, Subtitle A of the Inflation Reduction Act.

**Notes:** Prior projection is for FY2022-FY2031. Assumes no change in base appropriations.

# IRS Appropriations

## Enforcement

The IRA gave the IRS \$45.6 billion for tax enforcement activities such as hiring more enforcement agents, providing legal support, and investing in “investigative technology.” The funds can also be used to monitor and enforce taxes on digital assets such as cryptocurrency. P.L. 117-58, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, [required](#) cryptocurrency brokers to report more information on their clients’ trading activity to the IRS starting in 2023. (The law also appropriated \$153 million to the United States Tax Court.)

Supporters argue these funds will reduce the “tax gap,” or the average annual value of unpaid federal taxes. The IRS [estimates](#) the tax gap averaged \$381 billion after accounting for enforcement between 2011 and 2013, the most recent years available. Some argue the [19% decline](#) in the IRS’s inflation-adjusted (CPI-RS) funding between 2010 and 2019 facilitated tax evasion. Funding rose in 2020 and 2021, in large part to help the IRS administer COVID-19-related benefits. (For more on the tax gap, see CRS In Focus IF11887, *Federal Tax Gap: Size, Contributing Factors, and the Debate Over Reducing It*.) The Congressional Budget Office [estimates](#) that the additional enforcement measures funded by this law will generate \$204 billion in revenues through FY2031, although such estimates [are highly uncertain](#).

## Operations Support

The IRS received \$25.3 billion for operations support from the IRA. This funding covers routine costs such as rent, facilities, printing, postage, and security, as well as telecom and information technology. These funds can also go toward research and the IRS Oversight Board, which is meant to oversee and guide the IRS but has suspended operations due to a lack of quorum.

## Taxpayer Services

The IRA appropriated \$3.2 billion for taxpayer services such as filing and account services, pre-filing assistance, and education. The IRS has struggled to provide quality service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of unprocessed tax returns at the end of the filing season rose from [7.4 million in 2019](#) to [35.8 million in 2021](#) and [13.3 million in 2022](#). Phone service also suffered. Whereas IRS customer service representatives [answered](#) 59% of phone calls they received in 2019, they answered 19% and 18% in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

In addition, the IRS received \$15 million under the IRA to fund a task force that will study the cost and feasibility of creating a free direct e-file program. The agency previously committed not to create its own tax filing software as part of an alliance called the Free File Program. In exchange, private tax filing software companies agreed to provide free services to low- and moderate-income taxpayers. Roughly 4% of eligible taxpayers used the Free File Program’s private providers to file their taxes in 2020. Intuit and H&R Block, who previously represented two-thirds of the program’s usage, both left the agreement in the past three years. (For more on the Free File Program, see CRS In Focus IF11808, *The Internal Revenue Service’s Free File Program (FFP): Current Status and Policy Issues*.)

## Business System Modernization

The IRS also received \$4.8 billion for its Business Systems Modernization project from this law. In 2019, the IRS released a [plan](#) to upgrade the business systems it uses to administer taxpayer services, operations, and cybersecurity. These additional funds can be invested in customer service technology, such as automated callback systems for phone lines, but not used to operate legacy systems.

## Oversight

The IRA gave other Treasury offices \$557.5 million to oversee the administration of these new IRS funds. Of that amount, \$403 million went to the independent Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), \$104.5 million went to the Office of Tax Policy, and \$50 million went to the Treasury Departmental Offices.

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