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Mollenhoff Can See Any Tax Return

Presidential aide Clark Mollenhoff has access to any citizen's federal income tax return on a "need-to-know" basis, the Internal Revenue Service said yesterday.

A spokesman said the returns are made available in response to written requests from Mollenhoff in his capacity as special counsel to the President under Section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. That section of law says that tax returns shall be open to inspection "on the order of the President" and under rules approved by him.

The law also grants authority to view tax returns under certain conditions to the tax-writing committees of Congress, state taxing authorities and other federal agencies.

Under presidential order, the Senate Government Operations and Judiciary Committees and the House committees on government operations, public works, internal security and crime have been granted permission to inspect returns under certain conditions.

Mollenhoff, a former Washington investigative reporter, has been acting as a presidential "trouble-shooter" investigating present and past misdeeds involving federal agencies and officials. An administration source said earlier this week that Mollenhoff is able to secure anyone's tax return and internal files anywhere in the federal government simply by requesting the information.