

IRS Probe of Top Democrats Hinted

OKLAHOMA CITY, May 18 (AP)—Gov. David Hall and Secretary of State John Rogers say their income tax returns are being investigated by the Internal Revenue Service and both indicated they think it is part of a national probe of top Democrats.

Hall confirmed the investigation of his tax returns for 1968, 1969 and 1970, the three years immediately before he became governor, after The Associated Press reported an IRS investigation was in progress.

He issued a statement hinting he feels it is part of a national Republican effort to dis-

credit Democrats, but declined to elaborate.

Rogers charged that "at least 15 Democratic governors are being investigated." Hall's statement hinted that he believes several other Democratic governors are being audited.

Ed Riley, an IRS spokesman in Washington, said he doesn't know if any other governors are under investigation. "If several are, it would be something highly accidental," he said, "It wouldn't be something planned."

Riley rejected the charge that the IRS was systematically looking over Democratic officials' tax returns. "Oh no, not at all," he said.

[A check by The Washington Post of some other Democratic governors' offices produced these responses:

[Gov. Dale Bumpers of Arkansas said through his executive secretary that his income tax returns are not being audited. A spokesman for Gov. Marvin Mandel of Maryland, who is on the West Coast, said he had heard of no audit of the governor's returns, as did the office of Ohio Gov. John J. Gilligan. Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter is out of the country.]

Rogers blasted "the gestapo tactics of the IRS and the Department of Justice" under the Nixon administration.

Citing a federal grand jury investigation of State Treasurer Leo Winters, another Democrat, that has been under way for more than a year, Rogers said the federal government is making a general effort to "smear" Democrats in an effort to divert attention from the Watergate scandal.

Hall's statement said, "My income tax returns for the taxable years 1968, 1969 and 1970 are being audited by the Inter-

nal Revenue Service. I am cooperating fully with the IRS in this regard.

"I am concerned that the returns of other top elected Democrats across the nation, including several of the newer Democratic governors who defeated Republicans in 1970, have also been pulled for audit," he added.

"My tax records are intact and accurate," Hall continued. "Apparently several different teams of IRS investigators have reached the same conclusion. In view of the Watergate disclosures, any prudent citizen would be concerned."

Hall was elected governor in 1970 defeating incumbent Republican Gov. Dewey Bartlett. Bartlett was elected to the U.S. Senate last November.

Treasurer Winters, a political enemy of Bartlett's, has labeled the grand jury investigation of his affairs "a Republican sponsored witchhunt" and has called for a congressional investigation of the Justice Department.

There have been reports that federal prosecutors will seek indictments against Winters and several state bankers.