

Tax activist ends hunger strike

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Because a tax-activist organization “misrepresented” an agreement with the Department of Justice to discuss activists’ arguments that most Americans are not legally required to pay income taxes, the DOJ will likely not participate in any such hearing, a department spokeswoman said.

Members of the self-named “tax-honesty movement” declared a victory last week when Rep. Roscoe G. Bartlett, R-Md., and Assistant Attorney General Dan Bryant signed an agreement to hold an open hearing in September discussing the movement’s arguments. The agreement, signed on July 20, was prompted by the hunger strike of Bob Schulz, founder and chairman of We The People Foundation for Constitutional Education. Schulz and Oklahoma businessman Roland Croteau vowed to subsist only on water until government officials agreed to meet in a public forum to debate the activists’ contention that most Americans are not required to pay income taxes.

According to We The People, last week’s signed agreement “commits the government to send their top tax and legal experts to a two-day September hearing to be conducted on Capitol Hill.” But the Department of Justice indicated WTP’s interpretation of the agreement is not wholly accurate.

Bryant is the head of the Justice Department’s Office of Legislative Affairs, which, among other things, handles requests from congressional representatives and their staff members. According to DOJ spokeswoman Lori Rabjohns, Bryant agreed to the meeting “as an accommodation for the congressman,” which is Bryant’s job, she said. Bryant was willing to listen to the arguments of tax activists, but the agreement did not necessarily include representatives from the IRS or “top tax experts,” as stated by WTP, the spokeswoman explained.

As a result of its mischaracterization of the agreement between Bartlett and Bryant, WTP has put the September hearing in jeopardy.

“Because the group (WTP) is misrepresenting the department’s agreement with this group, it is unlikely the department will participate,” said Rabjohns.

Schulz said he learned Monday that the DOJ wanted an apology about WTP’s July 20 press release. Schulz called Bryant’s office but was unable to speak to him. As yet, the activist said, his call has not been returned.

Schulz is revising his original press release. Nevertheless, he said WTP’s portrayal of the agreement is accurate.