

4 TREASURY DEPARTMENT REPORT ON PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

able transfers, treated as incomplete for estate tax purposes, gain an entirely unintended tax advantage over outright gifts.

To remove these unjustified and incongruous tax preferences, the Treasury Department recommends that, where a donor secures an income tax deduction for the transfer of an interest in property to a private foundation, the value of the property be excluded from the base upon which his estate tax marital deduction is computed.¹⁰ By placing contributions to donor-influenced foundations upon the same estate tax footing as those to foundations which the donor does not influence, such legislation would confine the tax reward for both classes of transfers to the income tax benefits which they were specifically intended to receive. Similarly, where the recipient charitable organization is a private foundation, it would eliminate the advantage which lifetime charitable transfers, framed to retain donor connection with the contributed asset, have over outright and unrestricted gifts.

D. SANCTIONS FOR FAILURE TO FILE INFORMATION RETURNS

To proceed with effective administration of the tax laws governing private foundations, the Internal Revenue Service must obtain completed copies of the annual information returns required of foundations. Unfortunately, not all foundations comply with the reporting rules prescribed by the Internal Revenue Code and the implementing regulations. While the Internal Revenue Service has taken what steps it can to cope with this problem—it has, among other things, undertaken the compilation of a master list of tax-exempt organizations which will permit use of automatic data processing equipment to facilitate identification of the nonfilers—its efforts have been hampered by the absence of an effective sanction for non-compliance.

Under present law, the willful failure to file any return required by law is a criminal offense. The penalty provided is imprisonment not exceeding 1 year and a fine not exceeding \$10,000. This criminal penalty is the only sanction available in cases involving the failure to file foundation information returns. Plainly, its severity makes it inappropriate in most such cases.

To overcome this defect of existing law, the Treasury Department recommends that private foundations which fail, without reasonable cause, to make timely and complete filing of a required information return be subjected to a penalty of \$10 for each day of delay beyond the prescribed filing date. The penalty should be subject to a maximum limit of \$5,000. A similar penalty, with a similar maximum limit, should be imposed upon officers, directors, or trustees responsible for filing private foundation returns if, after notice from the Internal Revenue Service of failure to make a complete and timely return, they omit (without reasonable cause) to remedy the defect within a specified reasonable time. Measured by the seriousness of the noncompliance in individual cases and sufficiently moderate to be appropriate in situations not warranting criminal treatment, these sanctions would afford the Internal Revenue Service considerable assistance in securing adherence to private foundation reporting requirements.

¹⁰ Commentators upon the problems of the present section have treated them in a context wider than that of private foundations. By restricting its recommendation to the area of the present Report, the Treasury Department intends no implication that such views are in error.