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IRS Must Pay Scientologists \$16,881

A federal judge in Los Angeles has ordered the Internal Revenue Service to pay the Church of Scientology \$16,881 for legal fees it incurred during a two-year battle over records requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

In 1989, the Scientologists filed a request for any government files indicating that the church had been designated a "tax protester." The IRS refused to turn over that information, and the Scientologists filed suit to force its release. Eventually, the IRS turned over a number of documents, and the

Scientologists then demanded compensation for what they said was more than \$25,000 in legal fees rung up during the lawsuit. The Scientologists requested reimbursement for \$20,000, and U.S. District Judge Ronald S.W. Lew awarded \$16,881.

"This is a terrific win for the church," said spokeswoman Beth Hraba. "The IRS should be releasing this type of information without anyone having to file suit." A spokesman for the IRS in Los Angeles said he did not know whether the service would appeal.
