

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3905

October 10, 2008

Douglas Shulman, Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 3241
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Shulman:

As you know, the filing deadline for stimulus rebates made available by the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 is just six days away. In the Senate, we fought successfully for the inclusion of Social Security and Veterans benefit recipients in the rebate program. While most taxpayers filed for their stimulus benefit when they filed their 2007 income tax returns, many seniors and veterans who do not ordinarily file tax returns have yet to file for the rebate. In my state of Rhode Island alone there are almost 18,000 seniors and veterans who are eligible for rebates but have yet to file.

I write to request that you extend the filing deadline to November 15, 2008. This extra month would give seniors and veterans the extra time they may need to claim their rebate. This extension would be consistent with the statute which states only that, "no refund or credit shall be made or allowed under this subsection after December 31, 2008." A November 15 deadline would still give you six weeks to process the applications and mail the checks.

With gas prices near \$4 per gallon and the stock market at a five-year low, the \$300 stimulus rebate can be crucial to veterans and seniors living off of fixed incomes. I urge you to give them a little extra time to file for this assistance.

I also urge you to put forth all possible efforts toward identifying the seniors and veterans who are eligible for rebates but have not yet filed the necessary paperwork. I held yesterday with IRS an outreach event at the Woonsocket Senior Center, and reached out to media throughout Rhode Island to publicize these unclaimed rebates. It seems likely that between you and the Social Security Administration and the Veterans Administration, somebody should be able to pull together a pretty good idea of who is eligible for an unclaimed stimulus check. Yet nearly 18,000 people in Rhode Island alone have yet to collect stimulus payments, and those payments' aggregate value exceeds \$5 million -- a lot of money to seniors and veterans in a small state like ours. Those numbers suggest that whatever outreach efforts have been undertaken by IRS this year do not seem to be effectively reaching those entitled to payments. If IRS grants the requested extension, as it should, the agency will have additional time to identify people entitled to payment who have not been sent a check, and determine what additional steps can be taken to ensure that they receive their checks.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Josh Karetny of my staff at 202-224-2921. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sheldon Whitehouse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator