

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 27, 2020

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable Charles P. Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20224

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Commissioner Rettig,

We write today regarding the urgent need to resolve all outstanding issues concerning the economic impact payments (EIPs) authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. With a second round of payments imminent, it is critical that the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) promptly ensure all remaining EIPs have been issued to eligible Americans.

In March, Congress authorized EIPs in order to provide urgent financial assistance to Americans struggling with unemployment and financial insecurity as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. On June 3, Treasury reported that it had issued just under 159 million EIPs “to all eligible Americans for whom the IRS has the necessary information to make a payment.” This number, while significant, signaled that many Americans were still awaiting their EIPs. Indeed, Treasury initially estimated that it would make 171 million payments, and more recent estimates from the Committee on Ways and Means showed that as many as 30 to 35 million EIPs were yet to be issued.

Almost two months later, Treasury appears to have made little progress towards issuing the remaining payments. Between June 3 and July 22, Treasury made fewer than 1.5 million payments, bringing the total number of EIPs issued to approximately 160 million. This pace is unacceptable. As the pandemic continues to ravage the nation, Americans cannot wait any longer for the emergency assistance they were told would arrive in the spring. Treasury must take immediate and decisive action to pay *all* eligible Americans, including taxpayers who still await a payment date on the *Get My Payment* portal, individuals who have received a Notice 1444 but no payment, and non-filers who do not have the technological means to register on an online portal.

Additionally, countless Americans included in the 160 million received only partial EIPs or had their EIPs erroneously offset by Treasury’s Bureau of the Fiscal Service. This includes taxpayers who had injured spouse claims on file with the IRS and almost half a million individuals who did not receive payment for dependents they registered on the non-filer portal. We understand

that Treasury also voided payments to surviving spouses who had previously filed returns jointly with their now-deceased spouses. This decision was cruel and has deprived grieving families of assistance they need now more than ever. Alarming, the IRS has yet to provide a timeline for when any of these groups will be paid the full EIPs to which they rightfully are entitled. Further delay is unacceptable.

As Congress works to pass additional relief measures this week, including a new round of stimulus payments, it is imperative that Treasury immediately resolve all issues that have prevented millions from receiving their full EIPs. We are deeply concerned that, unless Treasury takes prompt action to correct flaws in its programming and methodology, these Americans will continue to be left behind by subsequent payment efforts. Given the unprecedented burdens facing American families today, such an outcome would be inexcusable.

We believe a critical first step is for the IRS to improve its existing platforms for handling EIP inquiries. Since Treasury began issuing EIPs, constituents and congressional offices alike have expressed much frustration about their inability to obtain resolution from the IRS. Indeed, IRS officials recently reported that, as of July 10, the EIP phone line had received a staggering 15.4 million calls. Of these callers, more than 14 million received an automated recording and almost 50,000 had their calls dropped. Sadly, only 800,000—5% of all callers—were able to speak with IRS staff who had access to taxpayer-specific data after waiting an average of 36 minutes on hold. When each call represents a family that has not received the help they were promised, the IRS must strive to do better.

Similarly, the IRS's designated mailbox for congressional offices has been largely unresponsive, as it appears that there is not enough staff designated to answer the massive volume of inquiries. Since the mailbox was opened in May, it received 25,000 inquiries by July 17, at a reported rate of about 700 to 1,000 new inquiries per day. As of that date, about 15,500 emails had received a reply or been forwarded within the IRS for answers, and there were more than 13,000 unread emails in the mailbox. Only recently did the IRS allocate additional staff to work constituent inquiries in the mailbox, but additional resources are necessary for the IRS to process the massive backlog immediately. Americans deserve prompt resolution of their concerns, and the IRS must do more.

We certainly acknowledge that Treasury and IRS employees have worked hard to implement the CARES Act, and we appreciate their efforts. However, for millions of American families in financial distress, every day that passes without an EIP compounds frustrations and financial worries. Their pleas become even more urgent now that they also may miss a second round of EIPs because of unresolved issues from the first payment. So that we can reassure our constituents that help is on the way, please provide a report by no later than July 31, 2020 describing how Treasury and the IRS will ensure all remaining EIPs are paid in full within the next two weeks.

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Thank you, in advance, for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Richard E. Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives



Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate