

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2020

The Honorable Charles P. Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig:

We write to request your timely attention and assistance for our constituents facing problems accessing their Economic Impact Payments (EIP). We recognize that the payout of EIPs has been an unprecedented undertaking for the IRS, particularly amidst staffing shortages and office closures. Further, we recognize that millions of Americans have successfully received their EIP with little or no difficulty, either by direct deposit or mail.

That said, we have several constituents who are facing increased financial hardship as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and are still waiting for their EIP, or waiting for an error in the EIP to be resolved. While the IRS claims that all issues may ultimately be resolved with 2020 tax filings in the next calendar year, for many of our constituents, that wait is simply untenable.

While the IRS has made a good faith effort to provide timely and updated information on their website, our constituents continue to express their frustration that the information available does not provide enough clarification. Additionally, some constituents do not have access to the internet or a personal computer to utilize the tools available to enter payment information and track payment status. Many of our constituents are uncomfortable with submitting their information online for fear of data security breaches, which is an understandable concern considering widespread ID fraud efforts. Those constituents are increasingly dissatisfied with the IRS EIP telephone assistance number, which often has too high a call volume and too little information to allow for a productive conversation. Ultimately, we are concerned that the general information provided is not sufficient to address the unique and highly individualized situations that our constituents are facing.

Because of the diversity of unique problems that individuals are facing with EIPs, the IRS has opened a congressional inquiries email inbox to address constituent claims that come into our offices. While the intent of this staff-only inbox is appreciated, it has become clear from our casework staff's experiences that the line is not adequately staffed to address the volume of claims that have been received. Caseworkers across offices claim that information that constituents receive in response to those inquiries are simply reiterations of publicly available information – if they receive a response at all. The following are a sample of issues that constituents are encountering, for which we would appreciate a response:

- Individuals who filed paper returns for 2019 are concerned that the delay in processing paper returns, due to the closure of IRS facilities, is also delaying their EIP. If they do not have tax information on file for a previous year, they are encouraged not to re-enter their information into

the IRS website, effectively placing them in limbo until their return is processed. The IRS has not clarified when paper returns will be processed.

- Individuals with deceased spouses on record are having their EIP erroneously withheld, due to an error on the part of the Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS) that marked a “debt” on the late spouse’s record, rather than “deceased.” BFS admits to this mistake, but constituents have still found it difficult to resolve when access to a live technician via the IRS phone line is rare.
- Individuals have expressed confusion with the lack of information available from the “Get My Payment Tool.” The answer “Payment Status Not Available” that is generated for a payment that hasn’t yet been processed and mailed is the same answer that is generated if a taxpayer is ineligible for a payment, but there is no clarification as to which scenario applies to the individual utilizing the tool.
- Individuals have expressed confusion as to why their payment is not being direct-deposited, despite having their direct deposit information on file. The IRS does not provide clear information on how they are making determinations on payment method. This applies also to those individuals who have received prepaid cards in lieu of a check.
- Individuals continue to have difficulty accessing the “Get My Payment” tool, being told that the information they enter does not match IRS records despite every attempt to confirm the information they are inputting. There is no recourse for individuals who cannot access this tool, and no indication as to why the information within the IRS’s system is different than the information the taxpayer is entering.

If we were able to escalate each constituent facing one of these, or many other issues, and receive a timely and clear individual response on that constituent’s payment status, we would do so. However, the congressional pathway to escalate constituent claims is too overwhelmed to sufficiently address these concerns, and large-scale issues persist.

Given the proper tools to resolve individual taxpayer issues, our offices can be a vital resource to the IRS in times of extraordinary levels of constituent communication. We can assist in triage of constituent claims, pass on helpful information, and highlight issues for the agency’s attention that constituents continue to face. But, for this to happen, we need your help. We urge your agency to expand its capacity for casework assistance to EIP claims, and to resolve the issues raised above in a fair and timely manner. When IRS telephone assistance resumes at a normal scale, we remain hopeful that telephone assistors will have the capacity to respond to and resolve constituent EIP issues in a timely and satisfactory manner.

Thank you for your timely attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski
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Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

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