

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 9, 2020

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

Dear Commissioner Rettig:

Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, millions of families across the country are experiencing financial hardship and uncertainty. The economic impacts of this crisis are wide-ranging and have been felt in every community across the United States. As exemplified by the passage of multiple relief packages, Congress and the President fully understand that financial relief is a vital component of addressing the needs of Americans during this time.

Under the CARES Act, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has been integral in delivering this financial relief by distributing Economic Impact Payments to millions of Americans. While we appreciate the magnitude of this task, we are also aware that there are countless taxpayers still in dire need of their 2019 federal tax refunds. Unfortunately, many of our constituents have reported that these typically reliable economic lifelines are nowhere to be seen and that the IRS is not providing any information on the status of their refunds.

We are also disturbed by recent reports of a steadily growing backlog of 2019 tax filings that must be addressed before millions of Americans can receive their returns. For instance, the *Washington Post* recently found evidence that millions of paper returns, amended returns, and other related documents containing sensitive tax information are currently being stored in trailers or office spaces leased specifically to store the backlog of mail. Even more concerning are reports that, due to the closure of IRS offices across the country and the inability of employees to telework, this backlog is only growing.

Accordingly, we would like to request the following information on how the IRS plans to address this backlog:

- What are the specific timelines and plans pertaining to the reopening of the various IRS offices across the country and the processing of this backlog?
- Will there be a prioritization system for reducing the backlog?
 - Is the IRS prioritizing by date received?
 - Is the IRS taking hardships into account when prioritizing processing of tax returns?
- How long does the IRS expect it will take for all returns submitted on time to be processed? What is the IRS's estimate for the average time it will take for a taxpayer to get their return, from the date submitted?

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- The IRS pays interest to taxpayers when the agency has incorrectly withheld a refund from a taxpayer. Will the IRS be paying interest on all refunds that have been delayed due to this backlog?
- We've heard from constituents that they have had difficulty in finding out if their returns, amended returns, or other documents have been delivered (via mail) to various IRS offices. Will the IRS ease the deadline for when documents need to have been "delivered" by or "posted" by? If so, what would be the grace period?

At a time when countless Americans are struggling financially, tax refunds represent a lifeline for many households and are critical to the financial wellbeing of families across the United States. These refunds rightfully belong to the taxpayers and they deserve accurate and current information about the status of their owed payments. The lack of any information that millions of American taxpayers are currently experiencing increases hardship and uncertainty at a time when Americans are struggling most.

Thank you, Commissioner Rettig, for your attention to this critical matter, and for the IRS' work to address the economic impacts of this pandemic. Your swift action on this issue will help alleviate the concerns of taxpayers across our country.

Sincerely,



Abigail D. Spanberger
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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