

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 25, 2020

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

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

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Commissioner Rettig,

Historic wildfires have taken lives and destroyed homes and businesses across Oregon. Our communities are facing a long road to recovery that is compounded by the ongoing health and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. Many Oregonians are still waiting to receive their Economic Impact Payments (EIPs), which they likely need now more than ever. We urge you to help Oregonians access relief by extending the non-filer deadline for claiming EIPs and improving outreach to harder-to-reach communities.

The wildfires in Oregon have burned more than one million acres across our state. These fires have forced or threatened the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of Oregonians and destroyed neighborhoods. Although some are beginning to return to their communities, many are not. Early damage assessments have determined that thousands of homes and many businesses have been lost. The displacement and loss of home and livelihoods further compound the effects of the economic crisis we are experiencing nationally. Those who are facing this hardship need financial relief now.

Delivering outstanding EIPs to Oregonians affected by wildfires is an important step to help our communities rebuild. Millions of eligible individuals and families across the country have not yet received their EIPs. On September 17, 2020, the IRS announced that they were sending letters to 131,647 Oregonians who may be eligible for an EIP.¹ This outreach is necessary, but many Oregonians are unable to access their mail because their homes have been destroyed or their mail delivery disrupted. Additionally, the Non-Filer tool requires potentially eligible recipients to enter their information through an online portal. With many Oregonians still evacuated or residing in temporary shelters, access to computers and the internet will be challenging.

We urge you to immediately extend the deadline for non-filers to claim their EIP into the beginning of December. This will allow people in Oregon and around the country greater flexibility in providing the necessary information to receive their EIPs, and would still allow the Bureau of Fiscal Service to complete issuing payments before the December 31, 2020 deadline.

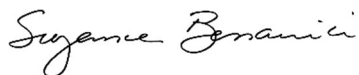
¹ Internal Revenue Service, *IRS releases state-by-state breakdown of nearly 9 million non-filers who will be mailed letters about Economic Impact Payments*, 2020, available at <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-releases-state-by-state-breakdown-of-nearly-9-million-non-filers-who-will-be-mailed-letters-about-economic-impact-payments>

The IRS should also follow its past success of partnering with the Social Security Administration and Department of Veterans Affairs by conducting targeted outreach with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and USDA Food and Nutrition Service to reach EIP-eligible Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients.²

In Oregon and in other states where disasters have disrupted access to the internet and many face mail delays, we urge you to coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on targeted outreach to non-filers. Many public buildings like libraries were already closed because of the coronavirus pandemic, and now fires and other disasters have further disrupted access to public resources. FEMA has established dedicated telephone lines for people seeking assistance in Oregon and other states affected by disasters.³ Treasury and IRS should coordinate with FEMA to establish a similar system staffed by IRS employees who can access sensitive tax-related information and properly assist eligible non-filers in making EIP claims.

We appreciate the efforts you both have taken during this period. We look forward to your response with more details about how you will improve EIP distribution and support Oregonians accessing the resources they need to rebuild.


Sincerely,



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Greg Walden
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Peter Gaynor

² Government Accountability Office, *COVID-19: Federal Efforts Could Be Strengthened by Timely and Concerted Actions*, GAO-20-701; Published: Sep 21, 2020, available at <https://www.gao.gov/reports/GAO-20-701/>

³ Maag, Elaine, *The IRS Could Speed Up Coronavirus Rebates By Opening Secure Phone Lines*, Tax Policy Center, April 28, 2020, available at <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxvox/irs-could-speed-coronavirus-rebates-opening-secure-phone-lines>