

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 5, 2020

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Charles Rettig
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Commissioner Rettig,

The U.S. Department of the Treasury and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) have been charged with crucial responsibilities and we appreciate the enormous effort of all the workers at your agencies to get out the Economic Impact Payments (EIPs) during this challenging time. While tremendous work has been done, there is still a lot more work to do to ensure that every person eligible for an EIP receives the full amount that they are owed in a timely fashion.

We are writing today because of the significant delays and confusion during the processing and receipt of the EIPs. We continue to receive reports from Vermonters who have yet to receive their EIPs after months of waiting, including Social Security beneficiaries. In addition, EIPs delivered via prepaid debit cards are causing confusion for recipients and financial institutions tasked with processing withdrawals from the debit cards. Adding to the delays and confusion is the lack of clear and timely guidance to the public and Congressional offices who assist constituents with obtaining their EIPs.

We recognize the tremendous challenge that sending out the EIPs represents, but our constituents, some of whom may be homebound due to COVID 19 concerns, have waited months for clarity and access to the EIPs. Social Security recipients, which include many Americans most in need, were promised speedy delivery, yet many of them are still waiting for their payment. Many Vermonters with internet access that have attempted to utilize the IRS Get My Payment portal were met with repeated error messages or were provided with limited to no information about their payment status. We request an update with clear guidance about when all remaining Social Security recipients can expect their EIPs.

In late May, the IRS announced that it would speed up delivery by issuing prepaid debit cards. Unfortunately, the rollout of these cards has caused a number of additional problems. There have been reports of cards being thrown away because they are not clearly marked as important documents, married couples with different last names have been misnamed on the cards, and the amount of funds for withdrawal being limited by financial institutions. Additionally, the failure of the IRS to coordinate this rollout with banks has led to circumstances where EIP recipients could be charged a fee for attempting to deposit the payments. The potential fees are unfair because those who received paper checks or direct deposits are not subject to these costs. We request that you provide us with a summary of the process that was used to determine who was

selected to receive the debit cards and how the financial institution that processed the cards was selected. This analysis should include any background in the consideration that recipients of these debit cards could be subject to fees that others were not subject to.

The current guidance from the IRS is that any errors in EIP amounts will need to be corrected by Vermonters when they file their 2020 tax returns. This is not acceptable given the immediate need of many of our constituents. We urge you to change this approach and allow corrected payments to be sent as soon as possible. Delaying benefits until 2021 will further impede the ability of Vermonters to meet their basic needs and will continue to put pressure on already strained resources.

Finally, while we have appreciated the direct engagement of the IRS with our offices, the information available to the public and Congressional offices has been insufficient, confusing and at times contradictory. EIP beneficiaries have been given tight deadlines with little notice about adding direct deposit and dependent children information. Similarly, Congressional offices have in many cases been unable to get clear and timely guidance to many constituent questions about EIPs. We understand the IRS recently established a new casework email box for Congressional offices but are alarmed by recent guidance that suggests that if a Congressional office submits a case to the new casework line, the IRS will call the constituent back directly. This is guidance could create real confusion given that past advice was that the IRS would not call a person directly – advice that was necessary because of the high number of scammers purporting to be IRS agents. Please outline ways that your agencies will both improve outreach and guidance for the public and Congressional offices. Please also explain the decision to have the IRS contact constituents directly.

We thank you for your ongoing efforts to bolster the financial stability of Americans as they experience the economic implications of this pandemic and urge you to provide the resources included in the CARES Act quickly and equitably.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY

United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS

United States Senator



PETER WELCH

United States Congressman