

For immediate release

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Filing Federal Tax Return Essential to Get Economic Stimulus Payment

People who do not typically need to file a federal tax return may be surprised to learn that they must file for 2007 to receive one of the estimated 130 million economic stimulus checks the government will begin sending out in May.

The Internal Revenue Service needs the returns to determine if people are eligible for the stimulus payments, which will range from \$300 to \$600 for individuals and \$600 to \$1200 for those filing a joint return. Those who qualify can also get \$300 for each dependent child.

To qualify for the stimulus payment, you must report at least \$3,000 of income from any combination of the following sources on your federal tax return:

- Earned income, including wages, salaries, tips and net earnings from self-employment
- Social Security retirement, disability and survivor's benefits
- Certain Railroad Retirement benefits
- Veterans retirement, disability and survivor's benefits

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) does not count as qualifying income toward the stimulus payment.

Earned income, as well as income from qualifying benefits can be combined to meet the \$3000 minimum. For example, if you had \$500 in earned income and \$2,500 in any combination of qualifying benefits, you could combine the earnings and benefit payments to reach \$3,000. Married couples filing joint returns are eligible if their combined income totals at least \$3,000.

People with less than \$3,000 in qualifying income, as well as those who qualify as a dependent on someone else's tax return, are not eligible to receive the stimulus payment.

If you are eligible for the payment and have already filed a return reporting at least \$3,000 in earned income, you do not need to do anything else. Your payment will be mailed separately from any other tax refund.

If you have already filed without reporting \$3,000 of earned income, and you have at least that much in qualifying income, you may need to amend your return to get the payment.

If you are filing a return only to get the stimulus payment (and would not otherwise file one), a very simple return is required. File Form 1040A or 1040, and write the words "Stimulus Payment" across the top of the form. Write the total amount of earned income for 2007 on line 7. Total the other three types of qualifying income (if any) and write the total on line 14a, if using Form 1040A, or line 20a, if using Form 1040.

A valid Social Security number is required to be eligible for the stimulus payment. That applies to those who now file using an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN), an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number (ATTN) or any other identification number issued by the IRS.

"The IRS is requesting that a 1040 filed only for the economic stimulus payment be mailed--not filed electronically," says Donna Doll-Yogerst, Oconto County UW-Extension Family Living Agent.

The IRS hastens to assure people that receiving the stimulus payment will not affect other benefits for which they may qualify. The returns will be used only to determine an individual's eligibility for the stimulus check.

"Filling out a 1040 IRS form just to receive these dollars is worth it," Doll-Yogerst notes. "If it seems difficult, ask for help. There are many services available to assist you with your return."

Free tax help is available for low- and moderate-income workers, including veterans, through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. To locate the nearest VITA site, call 1-800-829-1040.

Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) offers free tax help to people age 60 or older. As part of this program, AARP provides Tax-Aide counseling at more than 7,000 sites nationwide. For more, call 1-888-227-7669 or visit the AARP website:

<http://www.aarp.org> Click on "Economic Stimulus: How to Get Your Check."

The IRS suggests going online to its website <http://www.irs.gov> for more information and answers to questions about the stimulus payments.

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