



MORE OUTREACH NEEDED:

MORE THAN 400,000 TEXANS YET TO CLAIM STIMULUS CHECKS

More than 400,000 Texans may be eligible to receive economic stimulus checks but have not yet made a claim, according to the IRS. Employers, nonprofits, and state and local governments ought to consider helping locate eligible Texans and encourage them to file for stimulus payments. These rebates can still be claimed by filing a 2007 tax return before the October 15 deadline. Veterans, retirees, and others who typically are not required to file tax returns are at the highest risk of not receiving their share of the stimulus. As of late June, Texans are missing out on more than \$124 million in unclaimed rebates.

- **The IRS says that more than 400,000 Texans have not claimed their economic stimulus payments, leaving \$124 million unclaimed.**
- **Texans have until October 15 to file a 2007 tax return to claim their stimulus checks.**
- **Employers, nonprofits, and state and local governments ought to consider helping locate eligible Texans and encourage them to file for their stimulus checks.**
- **The IRS offers outreach materials on their [website](#).**

Economic Stimulus Payments: Who, What, Why, & How

Federal policymakers authorized stimulus rebates earlier this year to cushion the U.S. economy from recession and to ease pressure on family budgets. For filers with no tax liability, there is a minimum stimulus payment of \$300 (\$600 for married couples filing jointly), as long as the individual or couple had at least \$3000 in qualifying income in 2007. Eligible filers may also receive \$300 for each child under 17. Qualifying income includes:

- Social Security monthly retirement, survivor, and disability benefits;
- Social Security-equivalent part of Tier 1 Railroad Retirement benefits;
- Veterans' disability compensation, pension, and survivor benefits;
- Earned income, including wages, salaries, tips, self-employment, and nontaxable combat pay.

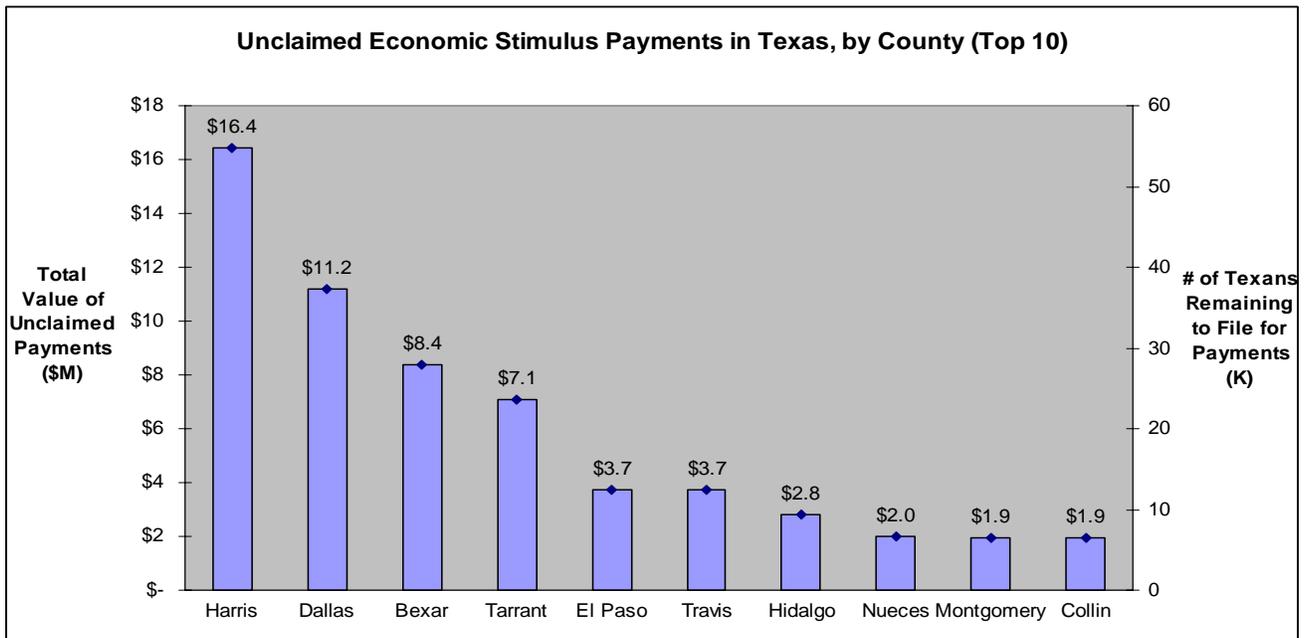
Supplemental security income (SSI) and state, federal, and private pensions are not qualifying income. Individuals eligible to be a dependent on another's return cannot claim rebates. Stimulus payments are not taxable and do not affect eligibility for federal benefits, such as Food Stamps, TANF, Medicaid, or Social Security. Filing a 2007 return does not make future filing necessary.

IRS Outreach: Hits & Misses

The IRS mailed outreach packages to 5.2 million veterans and retirees who may be eligible for rebates but have not yet filed. These mailings include:

- Filing instructions;
- A sample completed Form 1040A;
- A blank Form 1040A.

Eligible Texas retirees and veterans should check their mail for these packages. The following chart shows the substantial number and dollar-value of Texans' unclaimed stimulus payments, by county. Harris County is missing out on the most, with \$16.4 million in rebates unclaimed by almost 55,000 veterans and retirees.



While we commend the IRS's campaign to identify and inform retirees and veterans regarding economic stimulus payments, we must also note there are Texans not reached by the IRS effort. The IRS's count of 5.2 million Americans, and correspondingly of 400,000 Texans, although substantial, includes only those individuals that the IRS could identify through the Social Security or Veterans Affairs systems. What about Texans who do not typically file and are not beneficiaries of these systems? The IRS does not seem to have directed any outreach to this population in particular. State and local governments, employers, and community organizations should consider additional efforts to locate these eligible Texans and to encourage them to file for their stimulus payments.

Recommendations

- Publicize the October 15 filing deadline through payroll inserts to employees, radio and print ads, billboards, signage in and around public transit systems, and/or other media outlets that reach Texans who may not typically file tax returns;
- Support and promote AARP TaxAide and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites, such as Community Tax Centers in Austin, which provide free income tax preparation to eligible Texans;
- Implement any of CBPP's dozen outreach ideas listed here: <http://www.cbpp.org/stimuluspayment2008/12ways.pdf>.

References

For more details on the unclaimed economic stimulus payments, see: <http://www.cbpp.org/stimuluspayment2008/> or <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=184928,00.html>.

For more general information on filing for economic stimulus payments, or for a set of ready-to-use outreach materials, see: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=177937,00.html>.

For a list of Texas IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers where face-to-face filing help can be obtained on a walk-in basis, see: <http://www.irs.gov/localcontacts/article/0,,id=98337,00.html>.