

Murphy, Courtney Alert Connecticut Residents to Process for Claiming Economic Stimulus Rebate Check

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HARTFORD, CT – In response to a flood of phone calls into their respective offices, today Congressmen Joe Courtney (CT-02) and Chris Murphy (CT-05) held a press conference to instruct Connecticut residents on the process for claiming their economic stimulus rebate check. Last week, the President signed the bipartisan economic stimulus package passed by Congress that will put money in the hands of 1.5 million Connecticut families as soon as May.

"A benefit that is not claimed is no benefit at all and will do little to help energize our sluggish economy," stated Courtney. "We want to make sure that Connecticut's hardworking residents who have earned a rebate check understand how to receive it, so that our constituents may have a little piece of mind. I urge all Second Congressional District residents with rebate questions to contact my office."

"I hope this program will be the shot in the arm that our economy needs," said Murphy, "and a boost to the family budgets of millions of Connecticut residents. But it won't do any good if people don't know how to get their checks. That's why we're here today, to make sure that everyone understands how to benefit from the rebate."

The two representatives stressed that all individuals must file a federal 2007 tax return with the Internal Revenue Service to claim the rebate check even if their income level has previously not required them to do so. In order to get rebates quickly, they urged Connecticut taxpayers to file their taxes as soon as possible.

The economic stimulus plan will:

- Grant a tax rebate for at least 1.5 million Connecticut families: up to \$600 per individual, \$1,200 per married

couple, plus \$300 per child.

• Provide a tax rebate for the low and middle-income families who are being hit hardest by the economic downturn. More than 130 million families, including 35 million families across the country that work but make too little to pay income taxes will receive a tax rebate.

• Give recovery rebate checks to 28 million households of senior citizens and disabled veterans.

• Grant tax cuts for large companies and small businesses, encouraging investments in new equipment and plants. Small businesses will be allowed to write off their taxes double the normal amount for capital investments.

• Help families avoid losing their homes to foreclosure. The bill expands affordable mortgage loan opportunities for families at risk of foreclosure through the Federal Housing Administration.

• Enhance credit availability in the mortgage market, the measure also includes a one-year increase in the loan limits for single family homes from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Rebate checks will be sent by the same method you use to receive your normal refund checks – either via direct deposit or by mail. These rebates are all tax free, and therefore will have no effect on your 2008 returns.

Seniors and veterans in particular have called Murphy and Courtney’s office asking how to get their checks. Both need to file an income tax return to qualify for the rebate check, regardless of whether they need to file this year. This is the only way the IRS will know who qualifies for the checks and where to send them. As a general rule, the IRS does not share its information with other agencies, like the Social Security Administration.

The IRS offers free programs to qualified individuals who need assistance preparing their tax returns - the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program and the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program.

The VITA Program provides free tax help to low and moderate income (typically, \$40,000 and below) people who are unable to prepare their tax returns on their own. IRS trained volunteers are available to help prepare basic tax returns in locations throughout the state.

The Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program provides free one-on-one counseling and tax preparation services to people age 60 and older.

For more information and assistance in filing your taxes, go to Murphy's "Online Tax Resource Center".

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