

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY

...don't cut it.

April 2, 2020

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

The Honorable Andrew Saul
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Secretary Mnuchin, Secretary Wilkie, and Commissioner Saul:

The Strengthen Social Security Coalition (SSSC) is a broad-based alliance of over 350 national and statewide organizations, including, among many others, women's, labor, aging, disability, veterans, and civil rights groups representing over 50 million Americans. We are very thankful for your new guidance which excludes Social Security beneficiaries from filing a tax return to receive their stimulus payments.

Yet, the SSSC is still extremely concerned that many Americans will not receive the economic relief that they desperately need during this national crisis due to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidance which requires seniors, people with disabilities and veterans who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or veteran's pensions to file a 2019 tax return to receive their \$1,200 stimulus payment.

As you know, our nation is experiencing a major public health crisis to which seniors and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable. These are the very people who receive SSI or veteran's pensions. The coronavirus pandemic is causing devastating economic stress. In response, Congress passed the bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, with the intention of getting stimulus payments into the hands of eligible individuals as quickly as possible.

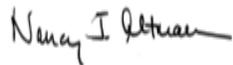
The CARES Act gives you the authority to share information, in recognition that the government already has all the information it needs to automatically make the one-time payments to those receiving Supplemental Security Income and veteran's pensions. Those recipients unquestionably have adjusted gross incomes below the \$75,000 requirement – because if their incomes were higher, they would be ineligible for those benefits. Unfortunately, current IRS guidance puts the burden on those most vulnerable: those with incomes too low to owe income taxes and file a return. Unquestionably, this requirement will delay these payments. Even worse, similar to what we saw [in 2008](#), we know there will be millions who never receive the payments they are owed, because of the tax return requirement.

We encourage your agencies to use the authority outlined in the CARES Act to allow for automatic payments to any person who already receives federal benefits, regardless of whether they are required to file a tax return. The burden of filing a tax return for this group will cause undue harm, especially given the lack of free tax assistance during this crisis and the need for these most at risk to isolate themselves.

Again, we are thankful that Social Security beneficiaries do not have to file tax returns simply to receive the CARES payments. We urge you to prioritize getting those payments out the door immediately. In addition, please reverse the IRS guidance with respect to SSI recipients and veterans receiving veterans' pensions.

In short, we urge you to act as swiftly as possible to support all American families and our nation's economy by sending payments to every eligible American without additional action on their part. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy J. Altman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy J. Altman
Chair