

How to Claim Your \$300 (or More)

"Empty pockets never held anyone back. Only empty heads and empty hearts can do that."

-- Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, U.S. clergyman and advocate of 'positive thinking' (1898 – 1993)

"Money can't buy you happiness but it does bring you a more pleasant form of misery."

-- Spike Milligan, Irish comedian, writer, and musician (1918 – 2002)

Starting in May 2008, the U.S. Treasury will send "economic stimulus payments" to over 130 million American households.

This is a special one-time "extra refund" of \$300 – or maybe more. Here's how to tell if you are eligible – and what you need to do to receive your check.

Q. How much will I get?

If you have:

- Income more than \$3,000 but you paid no taxes? You will get \$300 (\$600 for married couples).
- Income more than \$3,000 and you paid taxes? You will get \$600 (\$1,200 for married couples).
- Have children under 17? Add \$300 per child.

Q. Who can get the refund?

Anyone with \$3,000 or more in income in 2007. The income can be from:

- Work income or
- Social Security or
- Disability payments or
- Certain railroad retirement or
- Non-taxable combat pay or
- Certain veterans' payments

Q. What if SSI is my only income?

If Supplemental Security Income ("SSI") from Social Security is your only income, then you are not eligible for the refund.

Q. What do I need to do to get the refund?

The refund will automatically be paid to eligible persons who file a 1040 or 1040A tax return and have over \$3,000 of income during 2007. If you have already filed your tax return, you don't need to do anything else.

Q. What if my income is so low that I don't have to file a return?

You should make sure to file a return this year. If you

are filing a return just to get the special 2008 refund, write "Stimulus Payment" in the space at the top of your 1040A tax return. You only have to fill in a few lines of the 1040A to qualify.

Note: To qualify, you must file your 1040A by October 15, 2008. You will get your money more quickly if you have a bank account and ask for direct deposit on your 1040A.

Q. I had work income of less than \$3,000. I filed a return to get my regular refund, but I did not count my Social Security or disability income. What should I do?

You can still receive the stimulus payment. File a simple amendment form called a "1040X." You will report that other income, but you will not owe taxes and you will get the stimulus payment.

Q. Will the refund count as income?

No, so you will not have to pay taxes on it. It also won't change your:

- Social Security or
- Food stamps or
- Section 8 housing or
- Other government programs.

Q. Is there FREE help to file?

Yes. There is free help for people with low and moderate income. Call the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program at 1-800-906-9887. They will tell you the VITA program close to you. There is also free tax help for people age 60 and older. Call Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) for free at 1-800-829-1040. You can also call the IRS hotline at 1-866-234-2942.

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Note: This community education column from the Legal Aid Society is not intended to take the place of legal advice. All cases are different and need individual attention. Consult with a private attorney of your choice to review the facts and law specific to your case.

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