

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20510**

August 12, 2020

The Honorable Charles Rettig  
Commissioner  
Internal Revenue Service  
1111 Constitution Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig:

We write to express our concerns about the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) continued delays in processing paper tax returns and the lack of clear answers provided to filers experiencing delays in receiving tax refunds, as well as to request information on the steps you plan to take to address these issues.

We have heard from constituents all across the State of Minnesota who filed paper returns and have not yet received their refund or even been able to check its status. Unfortunately, reports indicate that the backlog of paper tax returns pending review by the IRS continues to grow. A June 29 report from the National Taxpayer Advocate identified an estimated 4.7 million paper tax returns backlogged at the IRS—almost half of the approximately 10 million paper returns filed annually.<sup>1</sup> With June 29 being over two weeks before the extended filing deadline, we can assume the backlog is even larger than what has been reported.

While some delay in processing these returns may be unavoidable due to the necessary reduction of in-person staffing in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the IRS has failed to provide updates to filers on the status and timeframe for processing their returns. The IRS has promoted its "Where's My Refund" tool as a convenient way for filers to check on the status of their return, but this tool does not provide any information for filers that have submitted paper returns that have not yet been processed by the IRS. Additionally, the IRS's website actively discourages people from calling the IRS to check on the status of their return—yet there is no information provided on the website to inform filers about the estimated timeframe for processing their return.

Given the current economic crisis, this is very concerning. The coronavirus pandemic has caused the rate of unemployment, evictions and food insecurity to rise every single day. Many Americans are under severe financial stress right now, and we need to do everything we can to provide clarity, certainty, and peace of mind for workers across the country. Millions of people

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<sup>1</sup>*Objectives Report To Congress Fiscal Year 2021*. (June 29, 2020). National Taxpayer Advocate. Retrieved from: [https://taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov/Media/Default/Documents/2021-JRC/JRC21\\_FullReport.pdf](https://taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov/Media/Default/Documents/2021-JRC/JRC21_FullReport.pdf)

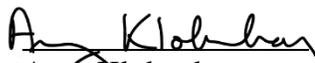
depend on their annual tax return as a key part of their income and rely on these refunds to cover the costs of critical expenses such as groceries, child care, and rent or mortgage payments.

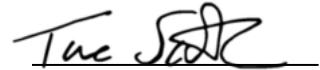
Accordingly, we respectfully request that you provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is your current estimate for the total number of backlogged returns, and how long does the IRS estimate that it will take to process these returns?
2. Does the IRS have any plans to update its website—including the “Where’s My Refund” tool—to provide clarity for people on the status of their paper tax return if it has not yet been processed by the IRS?
3. Are there any steps the IRS can take to inform people that their tax return has been received and is not lost?
4. Are there additional resources or authorities from Congress that the IRS needs in order to provide clarity to filers about the status of their outstanding tax returns?

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

  
Tina Smith  
United States Senator

  
Jim Hagedorn  
Member of Congress

  
Angie Craig  
Member of Congress

  
Dean Phillips  
Member of Congress

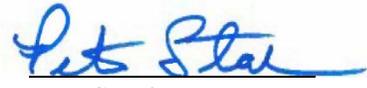
  
Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

  
Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

  
Tom Emmer  
Member of Congress



Collin C. Peterson  
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber  
Member of Congress