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NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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Gov. Blagojevich announces partnership with Center for Economic Progress to help seniors, veterans get their federal economic stimulus payments

Provides up to \$240 million to help jump start the Illinois economy

CHICAGO – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced a partnership with the Center for Economic Progress to assist Illinois seniors and veterans, who often are not required to file federal returns, file income tax forms to receive their federal economic stimulus payments. Seniors and veterans are seldom required to file tax returns because income from social security and veterans benefits is not taxable.

Over the next few weeks, state agencies including the Department of Revenue (IDOR), the Department of Aging, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) will work together with the Center for Economic Progress to develop a plan using state outreach resources to reach non-filers who have until October 15 to file the 1040A, a simplified tax return. There are an estimated 800,000 Illinois residents who typically do not file a tax return but who might be eligible for the stimulus payment is— amounting to \$240 million in potential rebates.

“In this struggling national economy, Illinoisans could use a little extra cash for everyday expenses that are continuing to rise in price,” said Governor Blagojevich. “I am pleased that Illinois will be working with the Center for Economic Progress to reach out to Illinoisans who don’t usually file taxes and make sure they get the benefits of the federal economic stimulus package.”

“The Center for Economic Progress welcomes the opportunity to partner with the State of Illinois to help low-income seniors and disabled veterans file their tax returns for free and bring their rebates home,” said David Marzahl, executive director of the Center for Economic Progress. “Many seniors and disabled veterans are on fixed incomes and every little bit helps. By partnering with the State, we will give Illinoisans a financial boost.”

Although the IRS is working nationwide to promote the requirement to file a return to obtain the rebate, many are concerned that eligible, low-income people are at risk of forfeiting their rebates and leaving tens of millions of dollars unclaimed. Low-income seniors, disabled veterans, and other eligible recipients may miss getting their federal tax rebate checks because they do not ordinarily file tax returns. The Center for Economic Progress has also pointed out that seniors may be difficult to reach because of their lack of mobility, limited access to the internet and the fact that many have not filed a tax return in many years.

Illinois' outreach campaign will include reaching out to senior centers and organizations throughout the state, the state's Veterans' Homes, and veterans' service offices which can get information about filing the 1040A to non-filers. Over the next few weeks the Governor's administration will work with the Center for Economic Progress to determine how best to use their volunteer capital and the state's outreach capabilities to make sure that those who do not usually file taxes, file this year.

"Seniors have spent many years working hard and contributing to our society. With today's economy the way it is, every little bit helps-- especially for older persons living on fixed incomes. I am excited to work with our sister agencies and the Center for Economic Progress to get the word out about the federal economic stimulus payments in hopes that all eligible seniors will take advantage this benefit," said IDoA Director Charles D. Johnson.

"It is critical that we get the message out to our Veterans receiving service related disability payments that they should still file an income tax form this year so they can take advantage of the new federal economic stimulus payments. Our state will work hard to spread the word about the new benefit to try and make sure that all Veterans eligible for the stimulus payments will file and receive it," said IDVA Director L. Tammy Duckworth.

Starting in May, the Treasury will begin sending economic stimulus payments to more than 130 million households. To receive a payment, taxpayers must have a valid Social Security number, \$3,000 of income and file a 2007 federal tax return. Eligible people will receive up to \$600 (\$1,200 for married couples), and parents will receive an additional \$300 for each eligible child younger than 17. Millions of retirees, disabled veterans and low-wage workers who usually are exempt from filing a tax return must do so this year in order to receive a stimulus payment.

"The IRS and many of its partners nationwide are reaching out to seniors, veterans and lower-income workers to help them get their stimulus payments," said Otis Damron, IRS Outreach Manager for Illinois. "In fact, fourteen IRS offices throughout Illinois will be open on 'Super Saturday' March 29 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. to assist those filing a return solely to receive their stimulus payment. IRS 'Super Saturday' locations are available on the IRS Web site at IRS.gov or by calling the IRS at 1-800-906-9887."

Seniors and veterans with questions about how to file their 1040A and receive economic stimulus benefits can call the Center for Economic Progress at 312-630-0273 in Chicago or 888-827-8511 from outside of Chicago.