

## LOWER-INCOME SENIORS RECEIVE REBATES BY FILING TAX RETURNS

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Thanks to the stimulus package passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bush in mid-February, millions of Americans will be receiving tax rebate checks in a few months worth at least \$300. To receive the rebates, most Americans will merely have to complete their federal income tax returns as they normally do. The Internal Revenue Service will then calculate the rebate and send a check.

But some Americans, including many senior citizens, some veterans, and some low-income citizens, do not have to file income tax returns. This is because their income is either too low and/or because the income that they do earn comes from Social Security or veterans benefits, which are often not taxable. Although such citizens are not required to pay federal income tax, the stimulus package will give them refund checks if their income from Social Security or other sources is at least \$3,000. But they will get a tax refund *only if they file federal tax returns this year.*

“The Cook County Assessor has just mailed out Senior Freeze application forms to many senior homeowners,” said Oak Park Township Assessor Ali ElSaffar. “In my experience, many of the lower-income seniors eligible for the Freeze do not complete federal income tax returns because they are not required to do so. This year, however, I am encouraging all seniors who visit my office to complete their federal income tax returns so that they can receive federal tax rebates.”

Although the Senior Freeze program is available for seniors who own their own homes, the federal tax rebates are available to all seniors, not just homeowners. “Whether or not you own a home, if you are a senior citizen you should file an income tax return this year to receive a rebate check from the federal government,” said Desiree Scully, Director of Oak Park Township Senior Services. “Senior Services, in cooperation with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), has long assisted seniors with income tax returns, and would be happy to help seniors complete income tax returns this year.”

Seniors needing general help with their income tax returns can call the Oak Park Township Senior Services Department at (708) 383-8060 to set up an appointment. Seniors who are filing solely for the purpose of obtaining the tax rebate are encouraged to make an appointment with Senior Services for March 17, when the rebates associated with the federal stimulus program will be given special attention. In addition, in the coming weeks representatives from AARP will be coming to Oak

Park's three subsidized senior housing buildings, Mills Park Tower, the Oaks, and Heritage House, to help residents complete their federal income tax returns.

Oak Park residents who are not senior citizens should call their accountants or the IRS for further information on the federal tax rebate program. The IRS can be reached at 1-800-829-1040.

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