



Rodney Alexander / Louisiana's 5th District
UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN

THOUGHTS FROM CAPITOL HILL

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February 8, 2008

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Change to Stimulus Good for Seniors, Veterans But Will the Bill Be Enough?

In response to an outpouring of Congressional and public concern, Congress passed an amended version of the Economic Stimulus Package Thursday night, and, thankfully, the version did fill in some holes the original version contained.

The stimulus package, projected to cost \$151.7 billion in 2008, no longer excludes 20 million senior citizens receiving Social Security benefits and approximately 250,000 veterans claiming disability. President Bush is expected to sign the bill into law soon.

The need for this change seemed obvious to me – and I am sure it seemed appropriate to the hundreds of 5th District seniors living solely on Social Security income who are always in need of extra assistance. It also stands to reason that our veterans are included in a measure to help the American people endure a weakened economy, considering the huge debt our nation already owes to them.

The amended bill also included protections to ensure illegal immigrants don't receive a check, another commonsense adjustment.

Now that a stronger version of the bill is sitting on the president's desk, the only question before us is: Will the package deter the threat of a recession looming over our economy?

Sadly, though the swift passage of the package was indeed a pro-active, bipartisan measure toward strengthening the economy, it seems very few members of Congress, economists and even everyday Americans who watch the news as well as the prices at the pump and checkout counter expect it to be a cure-all for our economic woes.

What everyday Americans can expect from this package is a small boost to their household incomes during a time when they really need it.

Individuals who earned at least \$3,000 in qualifying income in 2007, but paid little or no income tax, will receive checks of \$300. Couples in this category would receive

\$600. Social Security benefits and payments to disabled veterans or their survivors are considered qualifying incomes.

Other individuals, who paid taxes for 2007, will receive checks in amounts up to \$600, and couples will receive checks up to \$1,200. The cut-off line for receiving these checks is an income of \$75,000 for individuals and \$150,000 for couples.

Additionally, recipients will be granted an extra \$300 for each dependent child under 17.

How these checks will impact the economy *is* uncertain, but at least the power will be in the hands of Americans. Save it, spend it, or share it – this time the choice is up to the individual, not Uncle Sam.

The stimulus may not be enough to solve all our economic problems, but giving Americans the right to control their own money – and ultimately the health of the economy – does seem like a good start.

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