



Update the CARES Act to Show Congressional Support for All Americans

Jane Lilly Lopez, Brigham Young University-Provo

Congress must amend the CARES Act -- or add this provision to relief bills currently under debate -- to allow payments to all individuals with a Social Security Number to receive cash relief, regardless of whether or not they file taxes with or are claimed as a dependent by someone who files taxes without a SSN. The CARES Act currently prohibits individuals with an SSN who file taxes with a spouse or dependent who uses an ITIN from receiving the cash stimulus payment. As a researcher studying mixed-citizenship couples, this is not only relevant to my area of expertise but to my personal situation as well. In my case, the rule means that I cannot receive my \$1200 nor the \$1000 due for my two children because my husband does not have an SSN. Millions of Americans -- an estimated 8.2 million of us -- are in similar mixed-status households who are currently disqualified by the bill as written.

Based on my calculations, including these otherwise eligible U.S. citizens in the relief package would have cost less than \$6 billion, mere pennies compared to the \$2 trillion original package, let alone the additional billions in additional relief currently under debate.

If such a change proves too complicated for the already overwhelmed and underfunded Internal Revenue Service to implement on its own, Congress could mandate that the IRS add a link to its website through which families like mine can petition to receive the appropriate payments for all of our family members with a valid SSN.

To be clear, this policy change would not give stimulus payments to undocumented immigrants. It would only give payments to qualified U.S. citizens and permanent residents with a valid SSN who are currently disqualified because of their relationship to a tax-paying non-citizen without an SSN. Because this policy change is only ensuring that **all** eligible Americans receive stimulus support, it should easily garner bipartisan support.