



▲ Rep. Levin speaks with students about legislative issues.

*Representing the 12th Congressional District of Michigan*

## The Congressional Connector

Week of July 7 – July 11, 2008

### **Millions Still Eligible to Receive Stimulus Check**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recently announced a new summer campaign to reach those retirees and disabled veterans and others who qualify for the economic stimulus payment but have not filed to claim it. Congress approved the stimulus payments earlier this year and the Treasury Department has sent out over 100 million stimulus payments so far. The IRS estimates that more than 5 million seniors and veterans may be eligible for a payment, but haven't filed to claim it because they don't normally file a tax return. This year, they must file by Oct. 15 to receive the stimulus payment.

For those who qualify, there's a minimum stimulus payment of \$300 for singles and \$600 for married couples, plus \$300 for each qualifying dependent child. The non-profit Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has created a website that provides resources and additional information. [Click here to visit the site.](#)

### **Michigan Lawmakers Work to Boost Social Security Funding**

On June 13, a group of Michigan lawmakers wrote to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee to request an increase in the Social Security Administration's (SSA) budget. SSA offices in Michigan have been overburdened and understaffed, and additional funding is essential to improving their performance. Rep. Levin organized the bipartisan letter.

The letter read, in part: "... SSA's workload has grown significantly in recent years due to an aging population and new obligations related to Medicare and homeland security. While productivity within the agency has increased more than 15 percent since 2001, this achievement has not offset the impact of underfunding and declining staff. The backlog of disability claims has reached an unprecedented level: the number of people denied benefits who are waiting for a hearing before an administrative law judge has surpassed 750,000 – nearly double the number just seven years ago. Meanwhile, the average wait to receive a decision at the hearing level has gone from approximately 10 months to nearly a year and a half." [To read the letter in full, click here.](#)

### **House Approves Bipartisan AMT Relief Bill**

On June 25, the House voted to adopt legislation [[H.R. 6275](#)] to protect more than 25 million American families from a tax increase under the alternative minimum tax (AMT). The bill would ensure that over 800,000 in Michigan do not face a higher tax bill this year due to the AMT. The alternative minimum tax was originally passed in 1969 and was intended to stop a small number of wealthy individuals from avoiding paying any income tax by taking numerous deductions. However, as the AMT was never indexed for inflation, the tax will hit millions of middle class families this year if corrective legislation is not enacted.

The House approved [H.R. 6275](#) on a bipartisan vote of 233 to 189. Speaking in favor of the legislation, Rep. Levin said, "Many families in Michigan are already struggling to afford rising gas and food prices. With the economic turmoil facing our state, we must protect middle income families from this tax that was never meant to affect them." [For more information, click here.](#)

The AMT bill now goes over to the Senate which must act on the measure before it can become law.

### **The Week Ahead**

The House of Representatives will consider the Electronic Message Preservation Act [[H.R. 5811](#)] to address concerns that current preservation systems used by federal agencies and the White House to preserve public records are inadequate. The House is also expected to debate legislation [[H.R. 415](#)] to designate a 40-mile stretch of the Taunton River as a component of the Wild and Scenic River System. The House will also debate legislation [[H.R. 1286](#)] to designate an approximately 600-mile national historic trail.