

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2009

The Honorable Timothy F. Geithner
Secretary of the Treasury
Main Treasury Building, Room 3330
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable Douglas Shulman
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20224

Dear Secretary Geithner and Commissioner Shulman:

We are writing to urge you to take action in accordance with your authority in the tax code to postpone the fast approaching April 15 tax filing deadline and to provide other appropriate abatement of interest, fees and penalties for the citizens of North Dakota in the 34 counties and two reservations that were designated as "federally declared disaster areas" under the Stafford Act. President Obama made that declaration on March 24, 2009, for the period beginning on March 13, 2009.

Communities all across North Dakota have fought, and will continue to fight, dangerous flooding conditions over the upcoming weeks. From Beulah to Wahpeton, thousands of volunteers have missed work to sandbag, build, monitor and maintain man-made dikes. Unfortunately, this fight is not over as communities from Minot to Pembina are expected to face flooding through the middle of April according to National Weather Service forecasts. On top of it all, Fargo is expected to face another flood crest in the coming weeks.

North Dakotans across the state must be vigilant and remain on alert during the upcoming weeks. In more typical times, during the month leading up to the tax filing deadline North Dakotans would be gathering receipts and tax forms instead of bagging sand and fighting the forces of nature. In his weekly radio address last Saturday, President Obama outlined the massive federal effort to help in concert with state and local agencies and non-profit organizations and appropriately singled out the volunteers who are doing so much to aid the response effort:

"In the Fargodome, thousands of people gathered not to watch a football game or a rodeo, but to fill sandbags. Volunteers filled 2.5 million of them in just five days, working against the clock, day and night, with tired arms and aching backs. Others braved freezing temperatures, gusting winds, and falling snow to build levees along the river's banks to help protect against waters that have exceeded record levels."

We strongly agree with the President's assessment that the service of our community volunteers is not just inspirational, it's integral to our response to this epic disaster. However, this response is not without sacrifices and tremendous disruptions to normal life and business operations. In many communities, schools and non-essential businesses were closed and federal workers were granted liberal leave to sandbag. Businesses and families are now trying to catch up with over a week of work that was not able to be done while they built and maintained flood protection.

North Dakotans will continue to do what must be done to protect our families, homes and communities. While the FEMA damage assessment teams are starting individual assistance evaluations in a few counties, final assessments for all affected counties in the state are weeks away. We urge you to act proactively and issue postponement and abatement relief for this filing season in all federally declared disaster counties and reservations in North Dakota by the end of this week.

President Obama has indicated that the federal government will do what must be done to help. We ask you to utilize your full flexibility to provide immediate and proactive tax relief, which will enable the community volunteers and National Guard to stay engaged in the battle against flooding. It is not just victims with soggy receipts that require this relief, but also community heroes who have blisters on their hands and pains in their backs.

We look forward to working with you on this issue of the utmost importance to the peace of mind of the taxpayers in North Dakota. I think we all agree that tax forms should be the last thing in minds of these taxpayers.

Sincerely,



EARL POMEROY
Member of Congress



KENT CONRAD
U.S. Senator



BYRON DORGAN
U.S. Senator