



# Congressman Pastor's Washington Update

An electronic newsletter from Congressman Ed Pastor, U.S. House of Representatives, AZ District 4

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## NOTES OF INTEREST

- **Taxpayers have until April 17 to file tax returns** this year, the Internal Revenue Service has announced. The IRS encourages taxpayers to e-file to ensure accurate tax returns and get faster refunds.
- **Seniors may apply for Social Security retirement benefits and Medicare online** at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).
- **Social Security launches new Spanish online site:** [www.segurosocial.gov](http://www.segurosocial.gov).
- **Did you just become a U.S. citizen?** Contact Congressman Pastor's Office for a packet of helpful information.

**Congressman Ed Pastor**  
Representing  
Arizona's Fourth  
Congressional District

**Phoenix District Office**  
602-256-0551

**Washington Office**  
202-225-4065

**Sign up for the E-NEWSLETTER and/or Email Ed** at his Congressional website: [www.pastor.house.gov](http://www.pastor.house.gov)

## Working families encouraged to explore Earned Income Tax Credit, get free tax assistance

Time and money are often scarce, and during tax season, the pressure is on to meet filing deadlines and pay the IRS. During this trying time, I like to make sure con-



**U.S. Rep. Ed Pastor encourages eligible taxpayers to file for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).**

stituents are up-to-date with helpful information that

might make filing easier and get them more money back.

This year, taxpayers have until April 17 to file tax returns. A few extra days is always useful.

For working families, I wanted to emphasize the availability of the Earned Income Tax Credit. This is a tax credit that applies to low- to moderate-income working individuals and families, and it may help you keep more of what you earned last year.

To qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC, you and your spouse, if married and filing a joint return, must meet numerous qualifying rules. I strongly recommend you visit the IRS website for the Earned Income Tax Credit for additional in-

formation. The website address is: [www.irs.gov/eitc](http://www.irs.gov/eitc).

Individuals may be able to receive free assistance with their tax forms through an IRS effort called the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA). VITA is available to help low- to moderate-income (generally \$50,000 and below) people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. VITA sites are generally placed in convenient community locations. **To locate the nearest VITA site near you, phone 1-800-906-9887, or visit the IRS website:** [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

As always, my Congressional office is available to help you resolve issues you may have with the IRS or any federal agency.

## Success Story

### Constituent receives overdue interim Social Security payments

*The following "Success Story" is one person's story of how Congressman Pastor's office helped resolve an issue with a federal agency. While the office cannot ask a federal agency to decide in favor of a constituent, a congressional inquiry can help cut through the bureaucratic red tape and ensure constituents are given fair and timely attention.*

Phoenix resident Iloni Lewis applied for Social Security Disability benefits due to ongoing health problems that kept her from working. Following an appeal, an Administrative Law Judge rendered a favorable decision in July of 2011. Ms. Lewis was looking forward to the monthly disability payments that would help her pay bills.

However, she was notified in August of 2011 that an Appeals Council would review her case. If a final decision was not rendered in 110 days after the date of the Administrative Law Judge's favorable decision, which would fall in early October, Ms. Lewis would have the right to interim benefits. Interim benefits would continue until a final decision was made.

Ms. Lewis waited. October passed and she heard nothing. She had already lost her house and bills were overdue. In November, she visited a local Social Security Office, which contacted the Payment Center to inquire about her interim payments. But Ms. Lewis did not receive a response. In December, she contacted Congressman Pastor's Office and explained the urgency of her situation.

Congressman Pastor's constituent services representative contacted the Appeals Council in Falls Church, Va., to get answers. The Appeals Council updated its records and authorized the Payment Center to issue her interim benefits. By January, Ms. Lewis received a Social Security check for overdue payments. She also will begin to receive monthly interim payments until a decision is made on her appeal.