

March 31, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Reviewer of 1220-0050

FROM: JAY RYAN, Chief
Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys
Bureau of Labor Statistics

SUBJECT: Non-substantive Change Request for the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE) – 2009 Stimulus Payment Questions

In early 2009, the Federal government approved the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. As a result of the act, in May or June 2009 many people who receive Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veterans, or Railroad Retirement benefits will also receive a one-time stimulus payment of \$250.

In both 2001 and 2008, the Consumer Expenditure Survey added several questions to the Interview survey to capture data on the 2001 and 2008 Tax Rebates, respectively. We are now seeking approval to add to the CE Interview Survey a set of questions about the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act one-time stimulus payment. The data collected will allow researchers to assess the effect of this stimulus payment on consumer spending. To allow for an easier comparison of the 2009 dataset to prior datasets, the questions we propose adding to the 2009 survey are nearly identical to the questions we added in 2008. Please refer to Attachment A for the specific questions we propose adding to the CE Interview Survey.

We will ask the questions of each CU member who reports receiving in the current interview or in a prior interview Social Security, SSI, or Railroad Retirement benefits. Please note, individuals who only receive VA disability benefits will not be asked questions about the 2009 one-time stimulus payment. The level of complexity involved in asking the stimulus payment questions of these individuals was too high to successfully implement the questions in the available development timeframe.

We will include the proposed questions in the CE Interview survey in July, August, and September of 2009. The additional questions are expected to take less than 1 minute to answer. Given the short response time and the relatively small number of people answering the questions relative to the CE sample size, the change in overall burden hours is insignificant.

Current OMB approval of the CE surveys is scheduled to expire March 31, 2010.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Jay Ryan at 202-691-5139 or e-mail at Ryan.Jay@bls.gov or Peggy Suarez at 202-691-6186 or e-mail at Suarez.Peggy@bls.gov.

ATTACHMENT A - 2009 CE Interview Survey Proposed One-Time Stimulus Payment Questions

Section 22A Change

Add the following two questions to the end of Section 22A:

In early 2009, the Federal government approved the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. As a result of the act, in May or June 2009 many people who receive Social Security, SSI, or Railroad Retirement benefits also received a one time stimulus payment of \$250. This is different from a refund on your annual income taxes.

In May or June 2009, did [fill: you/NAME] receive a one time stimulus payment of \$250?

1. Yes
2. No

Did the \$250 stimulus payment lead [fill you/NAME] mostly to increase spending, mostly to increase savings, or mostly to pay off debt?

1. mostly to increase spending
2. mostly to increase saving
3. mostly to pay off debt