

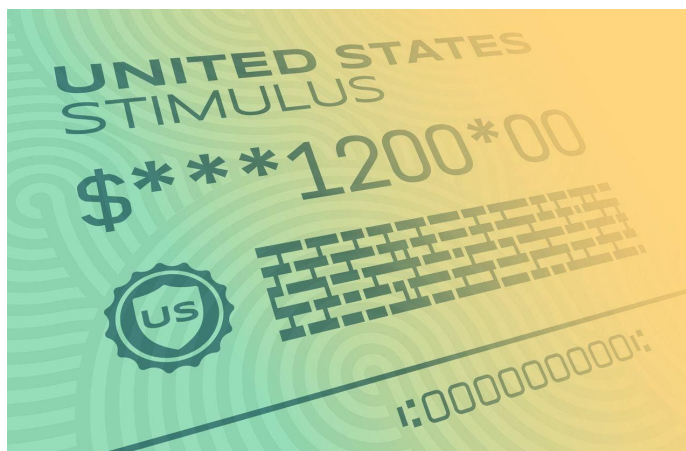
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All U.S. citizens are entitled to stimulus relief, even if they are married to foreign nationals

End the unfair and immoral marriage penalty in the stimulus legislation.

By Greg Kelly and Chris Wallace-Sept 27, 2020

This column is part of our ongoing opinion commentary on faith, called [Living Our Faith](#). Find this week's reader question and get weekly roundups of the project in your email inbox by signing up for the [Living Our Faith newsletter](#)



Jackie Gomez is a U.S. citizen and the mother of five kids from McKinney. She is married to a Mexican national. When she found out that she wasn't eligible for a stimulus check, Gomez felt like it was "a slap in the face."

Because of the economic downturn, Gomez has faced economic hardships, including not sending her oldest child to Collin Community College. When everyday Americans like Gomez can't meet their basic needs, you can't expect them to spend money on rent or utilities. They won't be eating in restaurants, getting haircuts or buying new clothing, activities that stimulate our economy.

That is why, as faith and business leaders, we urge our Republican senators to end the unfair and immoral marriage penalty in the stimulus legislation by prioritizing the American Citizen Coronavirus Relief Act in the next federal coronavirus stimulus package.

Denying federal relief to mixed-status families is morally wrong. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act was supposed to provide stimulus checks for all

Americans with Social Security numbers. But a subtle change in federal tax law in 2017 requires both spouses in a marriage to have Social Security numbers, resulting in many Americans becoming ineligible for assistance because they are married to foreign nationals who are not U.S. citizens.

As a result of this careless oversight, 1.7 million U.S. citizens or green-card holders, along with their 3.7 million children, were left out of the stimulus package, according to estimates by the Migration Policy Institute. These are taxpayers who reported their earnings to our government and their exclusion is un-American to its core.

The American Citizen Coronavirus Relief Act, introduced by Sens. Marco Rubio, R-Florida, and Thom Tillis, R-N.C., would fix this oversight by ensuring that every U.S. citizen and legal resident would receive \$1,200 and each of their children would receive \$500. According to **TexasGOPVote**, stimulus checks for the estimated 940,000 who were originally excluded in Texas would inject \$508.2 million into our state's economy.

Without steady employment and financial assistance needed due to the pandemic, many of these families could struggle to get back on their feet, increasing the likelihood of evictions, hunger and homelessness. Sen. John Cornyn has co-sponsored the American Citizen Coronavirus Relief Act, and we ask Sen. Ted Cruz to do the same.

If Congress does not act, our state's falling employment rate could creep back up, and our country's recession could get worse. Families cannot wait much longer to pay their overdue rent and bills. We need Congress to act in a bipartisan manner to pass a CARES 2.0 stimulus package immediately.

*Greg Kelly is the auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of Dallas and a leader with **Dallas Area Interfaith**.*

Chris Wallace is chief executive of the North Texas Commission and a co-chair of the Texas Business Immigration Coalition.