

# Alexander: Stimulus means \$250 million for 5th District residents

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Many Americans will receive their economic stimulus checks this week, and U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander is hopeful the money will serve as a catalyst to jumpstart the country's struggling economy.

Alexander, who spoke at the Children's Coalition Monday to promote "Cover the Uninsured" week, said residents in the 5th congressional district will receive \$250 million as part of the federal government's economic stimulus package.

"I certainly think the stimulus package will help," said Alexander, R-Quitman.

"It's not a give-away program, but tax money that comes back to people who sent it to Washington to begin with," Alexander said. "Some are fortunate enough to get a stimulus package without sending any money to Washington.

"We need to do what we can to inject into this economy at this time for people to feel better about the economy. That \$250 million for the 5th District alone is a pretty sizeable amount of money."

Alexander believes most people who

receive economic stimulus checks will spend it in some fashion. They may pay for needed items like school clothes for their children or use it to pay off bills, but he believes it will have a positive influence on Louisiana's economy as well as the nation's.

While President Bush only recently acknowledged the economy had taken a downturn, Alexander doesn't deny the country is experiencing some difficult times on the economic front.

"I'm assuming we are in a recession," Alexander said. "I've heard economists who all have a different opinion about what we need to do and what's going on now. Some say we're not in a recession because we can still borrow money less than the inflation rate, but I don't know."

"It's a complicated issue out there now and what we need to do and how it's going to affect us in the long run is a very complicated situation," Alexander continued. "Even those well-educated economists who are qualified to talk about this issue -- they don't even know for sure what we need to do. We continue to struggle with high gasoline prices, and \$5 milk is tough to buy at

the same time."

"It's just a tough situation out there right now," Alexander added.

The dollar is at an all-time low compared to other currencies, which Alexander doesn't want to see but he says it does have some benefits.

"People are coming here to take advantage of the weak dollar by buying American products," Alexander said. "That benefits us a little bit, but we want to see the dollar strengthen so we can get back on our feet. I think that will happen."

He says the state of the economy shows just how vulnerable America is since it relies heavily on other countries for goods and services.

"About 60 percent of the petroleum we consume comes from countries that don't even like us, and we need to do what we can," Alexander said, adding there exists untapped oil deposits in the United States that should be tapped.

He said environmental regulations and environmental groups resist oil exploration off some U.S. coastlines. However, he said technology is available today to allow companies to drill for oil without harming the environment.