

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The United States House of Representatives today passed the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008 (H.R. 5719). The legislation incorporates important provisions from Representative Xavier Becerra's (CA-31) H.R. 5716, the [Taxpayer Bill of Rights Act](#)

. Rep. Becerra, Assistant to the Speaker of the House and the only congressional member from Southern California on the Ways and Means Committee, voted for the bill.

The provisions authored by Rep. Becerra included in H.R. 5719 would:

- Authorize a \$10 million annual appropriation for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs, which provide free tax return preparation services to low-income taxpayers.
- Encourage the Secretary of the Treasury to refer taxpayers to Low-Income Taxpayer Clinics (LITCs), and authorize an increase in annual appropriations to LITCs from the current \$6 million to \$10 million.
- Investigate the opportunities of delivering tax refunds on debit cards from a bank authorized by the Treasury Department to those taxpayers without bank accounts. These debit cards would provide an alternative to high-cost check cashing services and other fringe banking products unbanked taxpayers currently use to access their tax refund.

“This important legislation extends a much needed helping hand to hardworking taxpayers by making common sense changes to the tax collection process and expanding taxpayer services,” Rep. Becerra said. “I am pleased that key provisions from the Taxpayer Bill of Rights Act were included, and I look forward to seeing them approved in the Senate and signed into law by the president.”

[Click here](#) to learn more about H.R. 5716, Rep. Becerra's Taxpayer Bill of Rights Act.

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