



From the National Employment Law Project

For Immediate Release, March 2, 2010

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OVER 200,000 TO LOSE JOBLESS BENEFITS THIS WEEK

NELP Calls for Extension Through 2010 to Prevent More Lapses for Long-Term Unemployed

New Analysis Shows Week-by-Week Fallout if Congress Doesn't Act

Washington, DC – Over 200,000 jobless workers will lose unemployment benefits this week as the February 28th cut-off to extend benefits lapses without Senate action, the National Employment Law Project announced today. NELP called on Congress to extend jobless benefits through the end of 2010 to prevent further interruptions and guarantee a lifeline for the jobless as long-term unemployment continues at staggering levels.

“This week, tens of thousands of jobless workers will receive the jarring news that they no longer have unemployment benefits, because Congress neglected to meet a basic benchmark for extending them. As a result, workers, families and their communities will be cut off from a crucial lifeline and face even more confusion and uncertainty about when and how their benefits will continue. Congress must extend benefits immediately – and for the full year,” said **Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project**.

NELP estimates that 1.2 million people will lose access to Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) – the temporary extension of emergency benefits that provides 34-53 weeks of federally-funded extensions. In some states, workers who face a cut-off in EUC will be able to access the permanent extension program, known as Extended Benefits (EB), although these workers represent only a portion of those being cut off this week. Additionally, state unemployment trust funds are forced to pay 50% of the EB benefits now that the Recovery Act's full funding for the program has expired, creating an extra financial burden for states.

Even with the limited opportunity for workers in some states to switch to EB, however, NELP estimates that in March alone, about 205,000 workers per week will lose access to *all* federal benefits and will have no further options available to them. These estimates, totaling 920,000 for the full month of March, reflect the sum of workers who exhausted their state UI benefits in February but were not entitled to federal benefits without Congressional renewal, as well as workers already collecting federal emergency benefits who were or will be unable to continue collecting the next tier of those benefits once their current tier runs out.

This interruption marks the first time jobless workers running out of their state benefits have gone without an extension since the original extension in July 2008.

“Even if Congress is able to reinstate benefits in the coming days – and that must be a top priority – the consequences of this lapse are severe. Each week, the drop-off of workers lacking both a paycheck and unemployment check will grow, and state agencies will also require days or weeks to respond to the stop and start of administering unemployment checks. A few days lapse in authorization could mean a month without benefits for individuals. This is a kick in the gut for many, many people,” said **Owens**.

The federal benefits provided workers by the ARRA expired at the end of February, following a two-month reauthorization in December. Without a commitment from Congress to continue the benefits past February, state agencies that administer unemployment benefits were forced to start notifying workers on February 19th that the program would be shut down by the end of month. Already struggling with record claims, the agencies have now also been forced to divert resources to updating their automated systems, fielding the inquiries from workers, and responding to a reauthorization of benefits.

“This is a crisis, and Congress must take it seriously,” **Owens** said. “There is no room for political gimmicks when so many jobless workers are struggling desperately to get by. To do right by the millions of long-term unemployed across the country, and to give them, their families and their communities the support and certainty they need, Congress must extend unemployment benefits through the end of 2010. We cannot afford to let families’ abilities to stay in their homes or meet their most basic needs become a political bargaining chip.”

The average duration of unemployment is now a record high of 30.2 weeks, with a historic 41.2% of the unemployed remaining out of work for six months or longer. 11.5 million Americans are collecting some form of unemployment insurance.

For NELP’s state estimates of the number of workers losing access to the federal extension, click here: <http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/march.PR.chart.pdf?nocdn=1>.

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Workers Prematurely Cut-Off of Federal Jobless Benefits Each Week Since the Recovery Act Expired February 28th

National Employment Law Project, March 2010

State	Average Number of Workers Exhausting All Federal Benefits, per Week, in March 2010
Alabama	3,349
Alaska	44
Arizona	6,407
Arkansas	2,368
California	6,747
Colorado	4,677
Connecticut	196
Delaware	827
District of Columbia	899
Florida	23,337
Georgia	10,730
Hawaii	971
Idaho	289
Illinois	14,540
Indiana	8,524
Iowa	2,802
Kansas	386
Kentucky	3,181
Louisiana	2,284
Maine	893
Maryland	3,646
Massachusetts	8,173
Michigan	13,775
Minnesota	246
Mississippi	2,036
Missouri	4,572
Montana	105
Nebraska	983
Nevada	692
New Hampshire	33
New Jersey	867
New Mexico	0
New York	19,033
North Carolina	715
North Dakota	159
Ohio	11,027
Oklahoma	2,349
Oregon	221
Pennsylvania	2,215
Rhode Island	69
South Carolina	5,237
South Dakota	116
Tennessee	7,528
Texas	18,411
Utah	1,453
Vermont	27
Virginia	4,836
Washington	183
West Virginia	1,273
Wisconsin	1,093
Wyoming	427
Total	204,949

Note: This chart represents the number of people who will lose access to all forms of federal jobless benefits since the Recovery Act expired on February 28th, including the 34-53 week temporary program of Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) and the 13-20 week permanent program of Extended Benefits (EB). In a number of states (AK, CA, CT, ID, KS, MN, MT, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NC, OR, PA, RI, VT, WA, WI), the EB program will continue to provide 13-20 weeks of benefits beyond February 28th to those who have run out of state benefits or not reached the end of the EUC program. Thus, these workers have not been included in the chart. However, because the Recovery Act's provision expired, which required the federal government to cover 100 percent of the costs, the state unemployment insurance trust funds are now paying for 50 percent of the EB program