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## **JOBS BILL ELIMINATES HEALTH CARE HELP FOR UNEMPLOYED, HURTS WORKING FAMILIES & IGNORES PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR COBRA SUBSIDY**

### **U.S. Senator Casey & Jobs Experts Urge Congress to Stand Up for 70% of Americans Who Think Health Care Subsidy Should Continue**

Washington, DC – Today U.S. Senator Casey (D-PA) was joined by jobs experts from the National Employment Law Project and health coverage experts from Families USA to criticize the elimination of COBRA subsidies in the new Senate jobs bill – benefits that are often the sole means for unemployed workers to afford health coverage. As a handful of lawmakers fixated on spending cuts threatened to override one of the most crucial stimulus provisions for the unemployed, advocates cited the results of a new poll (<http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/NELPSurveyResultsJune2010.pdf>) from Hart Research Associates that finds an overwhelming 70% of Americans think Congress should extend the health care subsidy.

This morning Senator Casey announced a new amendment to the jobs bill to reinstate the COBRA subsidy through the end of November.

"Millions of Americans have been hard hit by the recession and lost their jobs through no fault of their own," said **Senator Casey**. "If Congress turns its back on them, they will have an even more difficult time making ends meet. With no premium assistance, COBRA health care benefits would consume 75% of the monthly unemployment payment for a Pennsylvania family."

As a recent study from Families USA explains (available at <http://www.familiesusa.org/resources/publications/pending-jobs-bill.pdf>), if Congress fails to continue health care provisions, health coverage will be nearly impossible to afford. As each month passes, more unemployed people will become uninsured. NELP estimates that 144,000 individuals and families per month could lose out on the 65 percent subsidy for COBRA health care benefits and that the number without jobless benefits will grow to 1.2 million by the end of the month, absent Congressional action. Already 325,000 Americans will have lost their jobless benefits by the end of this week due to the delay in renewing the extension. The report is available at <http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/2010/long.term.unemployment.fact.sheet.pdf?nocdn=1>.

“The elimination of COBRA subsidies means that people losing their jobs will also lose their health care coverage. Such a loss of health coverage flies in the face of the recently enacted health reform legislation that is intended to expand health coverage to tens of millions of people,” said **Ron Pollack, Families USA’s Executive Director**.

The Hart Research poll additionally found that 67% of Americans support jobless benefit extensions for the 15 million Americans still out of work, and when asked if it is too early to start cutting back benefits and health coverage for workers who lost their jobs, 74% of respondents agreed.

“The public overwhelmingly supports continued aid for the unemployed as joblessness still affects a stunning 15 million Americans. Members of Congress who are putting the unemployed on the chopping block in the name of deficit reduction are making the wrong choice. Jobless benefits and health care assistance are precisely the kind of stimulus needed for economic recovery and deficit reduction. Given the choice, the vast majority of the American people would provide unemployed workers and their communities these vital benefits – Congress should be listening to them,” said **Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project**.

The Senate bill parallels House legislation (HR 4213) passed prior to the Memorial Day recess, when the last extension of health and jobless benefits expired – a bill that eliminated the health care subsidy for the unemployed.

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