

From the National Employment Law Project

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Contact: Tim Bradley, 314-440-9936 or Anna Deknatel, 646-200-5311

100K+ PETITION CONGRESS TO RENEW UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PROGRAMS

Before Sen's Casey & Reed, Workers from All 50 States & Washington, D.C. Call for Renewal Through 2011

Washington, DC – The calls to renew the federal unemployment insurance programs through 2011 grew Wednesday as a total of more than 100,000 petitioners from all 50 states and Washington, D.C. submitted a letter to members of Congress urging them to reauthorize the programs expiring November 30th.

Presented to U.S. Senator Casey (D-PA) by the **National Employment Law Project**, the petition represents the support and organization efforts of a diverse coalition including the **AFL-CIO**, which alone collected over 36,000 signatures, **Color of Change**, which collected 28,000 signatures, **Working America** and **MomsRising**, which gathered several thousand signers online each, as well as **USAction**, the **Coalition on Human Needs**, **Half in Ten**, **True Majority**, **Interfaith Worker Justice**, **United Auto Workers** and the **Philadelphia Unemployment Project**. Approximately 105,000 Americans have signed the petition to date.

The petition comes on the heels of a new poll that finds [overwhelming public support](#) to continue the programs. Available at UnemployedWorkers.org, the petition reads:

“Your action is urgently needed to renew the federal unemployment insurance programs before they expire November 30. These benefits have a significant, positive impact, not only helping millions of job-seekers in a tough economy, but also providing support for communities striving to achieve a sustained economic recovery.

“When Congress reconvenes after the elections, its first priority must be to renew and continue the full federal unemployment benefits program through 2011. As the holidays approach, don't turn your backs on America's unemployed workers and their families!”

Pat McNamara, a 61 year-old mother and grandmother who lost her job last year handling consumer affairs complaints for the city of Philadelphia, will be cut off early this winter if Congress fails to reauthorize the programs. She has been unable to afford health insurance since losing her job and said today, “I'm counting on Congress to put politics aside and do the right thing by reauthorizing the federal jobless benefits until the jobs come back. If all of us don't have the dollars to spend on the economy, there will be more workers unemployed and more hurt and suffering.”

“Since I was laid off, I have not even come close to finding another permanent job after sending out hundreds and hundreds of resumes. I have applied for everything, from administrative

assistant positions, to temp jobs and even customer service jobs paying just \$7.50 an hour with no benefits,” said McNamara.

Without reauthorization of these programs – called Emergency Unemployment Compensation and Extended Benefits – no further federal unemployment insurance will be available, and newly unemployed workers will only be able to access state unemployment insurance programs, which typically offer up to 26 weeks of benefits. Two million workers will be cut off next month alone if Congress does not renew the existing programs. That number will quickly rise to four million this winter absent Congressional action.

When these programs expired last June, it took Congress seven weeks to enact reauthorizing legislation, in which time more than two million unemployed Americans and their families saw their unemployment benefits cut off.

“In 2010, these benefits have already helped 9.5 million job seekers and their families and pumped roughly \$6.8 billion into the economy every month. Americans understand how critical these benefits are, and that’s why they strongly support continuing these programs. Congress should show the same understanding and decisiveness and quickly reauthorize these programs to avoid a catastrophe right in the midst of the holiday season,” said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**.

“With the recovery still fragile and joblessness projected to remain high throughout 2011, it is critical that Congress renew the programs for a full-year – to prevent the harm caused by short-term stop-gap renewals that fuel the insecurity and instability that neither jobless workers, their families nor our economy can afford,” said Owens.

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