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**The Limited State Unemployment Benefits Available  
to the Families Left Jobless as a Result of Hurricane Katrina**  
by  
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Most of the families left jobless as a result of Hurricane Katrina will be forced to survive on the record-low level of unemployment benefits available in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi, lasting up to 26 weeks. To address the significant financial hardships facing these jobless families, the Democratic leaders in the U.S. Senate proposed legislation (S. 1637) that would shift these families from state unemployment benefits to the federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) program. The federal proposal would also increase the minimum DUA benefit to at least \$270 a week and provide up to 52 weeks of assistance.

- **The average weekly unemployment benefits provided to the families left jobless as a result of Hurricane Katrina are the lowest in the nation. The weekly benefits range from just \$171 to \$194, which is far below the national average of \$270 and the average provided in Texas (\$260) where thousands of evacuees have relocated.**

Table 1: States with the Lowest Average  
Unemployment Benefits (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 2005)

State	Average Weekly Unemployment Benefit
<b>1. Mississippi</b>	<b>\$171.41</b>
<b>2. Alabama</b>	<b>\$179.82</b>
<b>3. Louisiana</b>	<b>\$193.66</b>
4. Alaska	\$194.04
5. Arizona	\$196.17
6. Missouri	\$206.17
7. Tennessee	\$208.60
8. New Mexico	\$213.71
9. Oklahoma	\$218.19
10. Arkansas	\$228.48
<b>U.S. Average</b>	<b>\$269.84</b>

- **The maximum unemployment benefits are also among lowest in the nation, ranking 1<sup>st</sup> (Mississippi), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Alabama), and 6<sup>th</sup> (Louisiana). The maximum unemployment benefits range from \$210 (Mississippi) to \$258 (Louisiana) a week (Louisiana), which compares to the national average of \$377 and the Texas average of \$336.**

Table 2: States with the Lowest Maximum Weekly Unemployment Benefits (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 2005)

State	Maximum Weekly State Unemployment Benefit
<b>1. Mississippi</b>	<b>\$210</b>
<b>2. Alabama</b>	<b>\$220</b>
3. Arizona	\$240
4. Missouri	\$250
5. South Dakota	\$256
<b>6. Louisiana</b>	<b>\$258</b>
7. Tennessee	\$275
8. Florida	\$275
9. Oklahoma	\$292
10. South Carolina	\$292
<b>U.S. Average</b>	<b>\$377</b>

- **Compared to most states, a far larger percentage of families from Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi, collect less than \$150 a week in unemployment benefits. In 2001, these states ranked 4<sup>th</sup> (Mississippi), 6<sup>th</sup> (Louisiana) and 8<sup>th</sup> (Alabama), with 23.7% to 30% of all families receiving less than \$150 a week in unemployment benefits, which compares with the national average of 16.8% and 13.1% in Texas.**

Table 3: States with the Largest Percentage of Unemployment Recipients Collecting Less than \$150 a Week in Benefits (2001 USDOL Survey)

State	Percent of UI Caseload Collecting Less than \$150 in Unemployment Benefits
1. Alaska	40.1%
2. California	35.9%
3. West Virginia	35.1%
<b>4. Mississippi</b>	<b>30.0%</b>
5. New Mexico	29.1%
<b>6. Louisiana</b>	<b>25.9%</b>
7. Montana	25.1%
<b>8. Alabama</b>	<b>23.7%</b>
9. Arkansas	23.1%
10. South Carolina	22.1%
<b>U.S. Average</b>	<b>16.8%</b>

- **The average unemployment benefits available to Louisiana families left jobless from Hurricane Katrina account for only 22% to 29% of a basic family budget in the major communities where the evacuees have been relocated.**

Table 4: Cost of Living in Largest Evacuee Communities Compared to the Average Weekly Unemployment Benefits in Louisiana

Largest Evacuee Communities (www.Gongol.com)	Weekly Cost of Living (Economic Policy Institute, Basic Family Budget for a 2-Parent, 2-Child Family)	Basic Family Budget as a Percent of Average Weekly Louisiana Unemployment Benefits
Baton Rouge, LA	\$715	27%
Birmingham, AL	\$874	22%
Dallas, TX	\$809	24%
San Antonio, TX	\$761	25%
Atlanta, GA	\$878	22%
Brownsville, TX	\$660	29%
Houston, TX	\$756	26%