



From the National Employment Law Project

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## **New Poll Finds 74% of Americans Think Congress Should Continue Health Subsidy & Jobless Benefits**

### **Hart Research Associates Poll Strongly Rebukes Deficit Hawks and House Bill Cutting COBRA Subsidy**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A [new poll](#) released today by Hart Research Associates finds that Americans overwhelmingly believe Congress should continue the health care subsidy and jobless benefits on which millions of out-of-work Americans are relying. The poll, in which 74% of respondents said it is too early for Congress to cut back health and other jobless benefits, comes a week after Congress missed a deadline to renew federal jobless extensions and is now reviewing legislation that would discontinue the COBRA subsidy.

“The public overwhelmingly supports continued aid for the unemployed as joblessness still affects a stunning 15 million Americans,” said Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project. “We cannot let a handful of misguided deficit hawks pull the plug on benefits that 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 the benefits they continue to need – Congress should be listening to them,” she said.

Specifically the poll finds that when asked which statement they agree with more, 74% agreed that “With unemployment close to ten percent and millions still out of work, it is too early to start cutting back benefits and health coverage for workers who lost their jobs,” while only 21% agreed that “With the federal deficit over one trillion dollars, it is time for the government to start reducing spending on health care subsidies and unemployment benefits for the unemployed.”

Currently 1.65 million jobless workers are relying on the COBRA subsidy and 5.1 million workers are collecting Emergency Unemployment Compensation, the temporary extension of federal jobless benefits. If Congress fails to continue these provisions, an

estimated 144,000 per month could lose out on the 65 percent subsidy for COBRA health care benefits, and 1.2 million could be cut off from unemployment benefits in June alone.

Additionally, when told that “Congress is now considering whether to continue the current program of federal unemployment health benefits, which pay sixty-five percent of health care premiums for unemployed workers,” 70% in the poll said they supported continuing federal health care benefits for unemployed workers. Sixty-seven percent favored continuing federal unemployment benefits when told that “Congress is now considering whether to continue the current program of federal unemployment benefits for workers who have exhausted their state unemployment benefits but still cannot find a job.”

The deadline to renew benefits passed on May 31<sup>st</sup> – the fourth time this year Congress has failed to extend benefits and avoid interruption of benefits for unemployed workers. Prior to the Memorial Day recess, lawmakers in the House passed a bill that would eliminate the healthcare subsidy, which is now pending in the Senate.

“The Senate must immediately continue the extension program through November and restore health care benefits. Cutting unemployment and COBRA benefits will only dampen recovery, and neglect millions who want jobs but cannot find them,” said Owens.

The [Hart Research Associates poll](#) interviewed 803 voters June 2-5, 2010, with a margin of error +/-3.5%.

For more on the unemployment crisis, see NELP’s paper released Friday, [\*The Crisis of Long Term Unemployment and the Need for Bold Action to Sustain the Unemployed and Support the Recovery.\*](#)

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