



**Statement of Christine L. Owens, Executive Director,  
National Employment Law Project  
On the October 2008 Employment Report**

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**New York, NY:** Today's employment report is a pointed and painful reminder of why the economy topped voters' concerns in Tuesday's historic election. The incessant drumbeat of job loss continued through October, with employers shedding 240,000 more jobs, including 90,000 in manufacturing, and 118,000 in construction, financial activities, and business and professional services. With 10.1 million Americans jobless and looking for work, the official unemployment rate jumped to 6.5%, the highest in 14 years. More than 2.2 million of these jobless workers—22.3% of the unemployed—have been out of work for at least six months, the largest number since in 25 years. Roughly one of every eight workers is unemployed and looking for work, unemployed but too discouraged to look, or working part-time because full-time hours aren't available, bringing the Labor Department's broadest measure of unemployment and under-employment to 11.8%.

"Jobless workers can't wait until next year for an economic recovery package that eases the hardship of unemployment while providing a boost to local economies," said Christine L. Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project. "The very first order of business when the Senate reconvenes on November 17<sup>th</sup> must be to join the House of Representatives in expanding the federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation program to provide seven more weeks of benefits for long-term unemployed workers in all states and 20 more for workers in high unemployment states. These workers are frontline casualties of the unrelenting economic crisis. Already, more than 800,000 have exhausted their emergency federal benefits, and more than one million will do so by the end of the year.

"The severity of the situation also demands that Congress adopt legislation that has passed the House of Representatives that will help states modernize the basic unemployment program with available unemployment insurance funding. These state reforms, which will reach those 500,000 low-wage and women workers who fall through the cracks of the unemployment system, will help boost the economy and build a 21<sup>st</sup> Century program that will serve the nation well heading into a serious recession."