



From the National Employment Law Project

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## **Senate's Failure to Extend Jobless Benefits Ending Help to 7,000 More Workers A Day**

### ***Republican Senators Twice Object to Quick Consideration of the Senate's Measure, Despite Bipartisan Support Expressed for the Extension***

Washington, DC – More than three weeks after the House passed legislation to extend jobless benefits, the Senate has yet to consider extension legislation, despite Senators from both parties expressing their support for an extension that would provide extra benefits for workers in every state. In the last week, two attempts to expedite passage of the Senate leadership's extension bill were met with objections from Republican Senators.

"Unemployed workers across the country are devastated and dismayed by the failure of the U.S. Senate to extend their lifeline," said Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project. "Every day, 7,000 additional workers are facing the total loss of benefits, in many cases after struggling to find work for more than a year and a half."

According to an analysis from the National Employment Law Project, 400,000 workers exhausted their federally-funded jobless benefits in September and another 200,000 will do so by the end of this month, resulting in an average of 7,000 workers a day seeing their benefits end. By year's end, 1.3 million workers will exhaust their jobless benefits, reflecting today's record rates of long-term unemployment.

"It's shameful and callous. Because the Senate has not acted, hundreds of thousands of workers are languishing without any means to support their families in the midst of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression," said Owens. "It's time for the Senate to do right by the families hardest hit by the recession— the Senate needs to do whatever it takes, working weekends included, to make this happen," Owens said.

After the House measure to extend benefits to states with unemployment over 8.5% passed on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Senate leadership— Senators Reid and Baucus— forged a bill to help workers in all states collect an additional 14-20 weeks of benefits. The measure would be fully paid for by a two-year continuation of an unemployment insurance surtax on employers— \$14 per worker annually— that has been in place for 30 years.

Twice in the past week, the Senate leadership moved for “unanimous consent” to quickly consider the measure and avoid the significant delay associated with a Senate floor vote and the amendment process. Even though going along with this process would not require any Senator to vote for the extension, on each occasion a Senate Republican – first Senator Kyl of Arizona, then Senator Hatch of Utah – blocked immediate action by objecting to the measure, without detailing substantive objections. In contrast, over the past several weeks, leading Senate Republicans, including Senators John Cornyn of Texas, John DeMint and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, have expressed support for an extension of jobless benefits.

As a direct result of the Senate’s failure to expand jobless benefits, unemployed workers across the country now find themselves without any means of support. Ricky Macoy of Quinlan, Texas, received an eviction notice this week after his unemployment benefits ran out two weeks ago. A Navy veteran and an electrician with 30 years of experience, Macoy has been supporting himself and his 11-year old son on his \$372 weekly unemployment check since he lost his job after a government contractor pulled the plug half way through the project. He has run through his savings, and can’t afford to pay for COBRA even with the federal subsidy. Now he is pawning his electrician’s tools in a desperate effort to pay one more month’s rent.

“We have survived some hard times, especially this past year when work was nowhere to be found,” said Mr. Macoy. “Unemployment benefits have kept us afloat, but now we may soon end up homeless without them. What the Senate does now will make all the difference for me and my family.”