



From the National Employment Law Project

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Senate Finance Committee Chairman Introduces Legislation to Extend Jobless Benefits to All States

NELP Urges Quick Approval of Extension Legislation as Hundreds of Thousands of Unemployed Workers Exhaust Benefits

Washington, DC – Yesterday Senator Max Baucus, Chairman of the Finance Committee, introduced legislation that provides additional weeks of federal jobless benefits to workers in every state.

Chairman Baucus' bill (the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Act of 2009), which builds on the House extension measure passed last week (H.R. 3548), sets the stage for quick Senate action and passage of extension legislation that will go a long way to help 400,000 workers who ran out of their federal jobless benefits in September and 1.3 million who will do so before the end of the year.

Under the Baucus bill, workers in all states will receive an additional four weeks of federally-funded jobless benefits. Workers in high unemployment states – those states with unemployment rates at or over 8.5% (currently 23 states) – would receive an additional 13 weeks of benefits, totaling 17 weeks of additional federal assistance. In contrast, the bill that passed the House provided 13 weeks of additional assistance to states with over 8.5% unemployment with no added weeks of benefits for workers in other states experiencing rising levels of unemployment.

The Baucus bill is also paid for by extending a federal unemployment insurance surtax on employers that has been in place for the past 30 years. Rather than a one-year extension adopted by the House bill, the Baucus bill extends the surtax for two years to cover the \$2.8 billion in total costs associated with the new extension benefits.

According to Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project: “Chairman Baucus’ bill represents a breakthrough – not just for unemployed workers across the nation who are suffering from record long-term unemployment, but also for the nation’s still-struggling economy. These benefits will provide a critical boost to those communities hit hardest by the recession. Now is the time for the Senate to take quick and decisive action to pass extension legislation.”

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