



National Employment Law Project

From the National Employment Law Project

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Senate Announces 14-20 Weeks Extension of Jobless Benefits for All States in Breakthrough Proposal, Clearing the Way for Quick Congressional Action

Washington, DC – Unemployed workers in every state will be able to collect 14 weeks of extended jobless benefits under significant legislation introduced today by the Senate leadership. The proposal also extends benefits an additional 6 weeks in high-unemployment states (for a total of 20 weeks in those states with 8.5% unemployment or higher) marking a major breakthrough for hundreds of thousands of workers exhausting their jobless benefits and setting the stage for swift approval in Congress.

“The Senate today has stepped up to the plate to deliver the kind of support that jobless workers and the economy desperately need. By extending benefits 14 weeks to every state, and an additional 6 weeks to those states hit hardest by the recession, this legislation is an essential component to economic recovery and could not come at a better time. We applaud Majority Leader Reid and Senator Baucus for their leadership in forging this measure together with Senators Shaheen, Dodd, Klobuchar, Reed and all those who worked hard to bring about a strong Senate extension,” said **Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project.**

The new Senate measure clears the way for the immediate Senate action early next week and passage in the House of Representatives soon thereafter. Two weeks ago, the House passed a 13-week extension of benefits for high-unemployment states. The bill announced today also recognizes and addresses the severity of joblessness in every state, as the jobless rate escalated to 9.8% in September and 1.3 million workers are expected to exhaust their benefits by the end of the year. As of September, over 400,000 workers exhausted their federal jobless benefits, and another 200,000 are expected to do so this month.

The Senate bill is 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.

Recent NELP analysis, [available here](#), shows that since December 2008, there has been a 110% increase in long-term joblessness, compared to a 36% increase in the total unemployed –

meaning that the numbers of jobless workers who find themselves long-term unemployed has increased three times as fast as joblessness overall. There are now 5.4 million Americans who have been out of a job for six months or more, representing a startling 35.6% of all jobless workers.

The press release announcing the Senate proposal is [available here](#).

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