

MEMORANDUM

TO: National Employment Law Project & Half In Ten Campaign
FROM: Guy Molyneux, Hart Research Associates
DATE: November 15, 2010
RE: Key Findings From Survey On UI Benefits

From November 5 to 8, 2010, Hart Research Associates conducted a telephone survey among 802 registered voters across the country. The survey's margin of error is ± 3.5 percentage points for the full sample, and it is higher among subgroups. This memorandum outlines this poll's key findings on voters' views of federal unemployment benefits.

Public Support For Continuing Unemployment Benefits

- By a strong majority of 60% to 37%, voters support Congress continuing unemployment benefits for workers who have exhausted their state unemployment benefits but still cannot find a job.
 - Voters across the country express deep support for continuing the unemployment benefits, with a strong majority (55% or higher) in each region favoring its continuation.
 - Politically, aside from receiving overwhelming support from Democrats (79%), independents (63%) also strongly support UI benefits extension. Republican support is weaker at 38%.
 - Support for extending UI benefits cuts across socioeconomic lines, as those with a college education (57%) and those without (61%) both strongly support the benefits. A majority of white college graduates (53%) and non-college graduates (58%) support continuation as well.
 - While white voters show strong support for continuing the benefits (56%), even larger majorities of African-Americans (79%) and Hispanics (68%) want to see Congress extend the federal unemployment benefit program.

Voters Reject Deficit Argument To Cut Benefits

- Voters reject the idea that it is time to cut back support for the unemployed due to the country's deficit problems. Seventy-three percent (73%) of voters say that with the unemployment rate at 9.6% and millions still out of work, it is too early to cut back benefits to those who have lost their job. Only 24% believe that a trillion-dollar deficit is a reason to start cutting back unemployment benefits. In addition, by more than four to one, those who feel strongly that it is too early to cut back (47%) outnumber those who feel strongly that we do need to start cutting back (11%).
 - Democrats and independents overwhelmingly support the idea that it is too early to cut benefits (83% and 80%, respectively), while a majority of Republicans agree (55%). In addition, 57% of Republican voters in the 2010 midterm elections reject the idea it is time to cut benefits.
 - Higher socioeconomic voters do not accept the idea that we should cut back benefits to unemployment due to the deficit, as 72% of college graduates and 74% of those making more than \$50,000 a year agree that it is too early to cut benefits.
 - Voters in all regions of the country support continuing to provide benefits instead of cutting them due to the deficit, especially in the South (78%).

Voters Support Benefits Until Unemployment Rate Lowers

- Voters not only believe that it is too early to cut benefits, but they have a specific idea of how long the benefits should go on: until the unemployment rate improves significantly. Two-thirds (67%) of voters say they want the government to provide benefits until the unemployment rate comes down substantially, while only 27% say we should not continue to provide benefits.
 - An overwhelming proportion of Democrats (82%) and independents (70%), and a plurality of Republicans (49%) want to see a decline in the unemployment rate before changing benefits. A majority (54%) of midterm Republican voters agree.
 - Majorities across region, educational achievement, and income levels believe the government should continue to provide benefits until the unemployment situation improves.