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National Employment Law Project

From the National Employment Law Project
For Immediate Release: March 20, 2009
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Over ½ Million Workers to Exhaust Benefits in March & April if States Don't Act

13-20 Weeks Federally-Funded Extension of Benefits Available in Stimulus for High-Unemployment States

Washington, DC – New [analysis](#) released today by the National Employment Law Project revealed that 567,000 jobless Americans will exhaust their federal unemployment benefits in the coming weeks if their states do not authorize a temporary extension of benefits provided for in the federal economic recovery package. Available to all states with unemployment rates above 6.5%, the Extended Benefits program would provide an additional 13-20 weeks of benefits to workers who have already used up their Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) benefits. Of the states whose unemployment rates are high enough to trigger the extensions – which are now being funded 100% by the federal government under the stimulus bill – only about half have passed the necessary authorization to receive the funds.

“Over half a million jobless workers will run out of unemployment benefits in March and April if their states do not act now,” said **Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project**. “The Extended Benefits program is a straightforward, federally-funded extension to continue benefits for workers in high-unemployment states who have already run out of emergency unemployment compensation. These benefits would come to very long-term unemployed workers who still can't find work after receiving all of their EUC benefits. This is the only provision in the stimulus bill that addresses the needs of these long-term jobless workers, and states should not overlook it,” Owens stated.

The Extended Benefits program, started in the 1970s, pays extended benefits in high unemployment states and allows states different options for tapping into the program. One option is for states to provide these benefits once their unemployment level exceeds 6.5% over a three-month period. While the cost for paying these extended benefits would normally be split 50-50 between states and the federal government, under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the extended benefit is fully federal-funded through 2009. Only a fraction of states, however, have adopted the 6.5% trigger provision.

- **States that have yet to act to receive Extended Benefits:** Approximately 567,000 workers would qualify for Extended Benefits after exhausting their EUC benefits if 14 high-unemployment states, as well as the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia, adopted the 6.5% unemployment rate trigger. As of March 19th, those states are:

Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Tennessee.

- **States that have yet to act to get 20 weeks Extended Benefits:** In places where the unemployment rate exceeds 8% – Indiana, Michigan, Nevada, Puerto Rico, and South Carolina – workers will be entitled to an additional 7 weeks of extended benefits if their states authorize the trigger, affecting approximately 132,000 workers.
- **States that already qualify for 13 weeks Extended Benefits:** Sixteen states and Puerto Rico already qualify for the Extended Benefits program under one of the program's provisions: Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Alaska, Connecticut, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Washington qualify for 13 weeks of benefits. Oregon and Rhode Island already qualify for 20 weeks of extended benefits. As a result, about 405,000 workers in those states will qualify for extended benefits when their EUC benefits expire between now and June.
- **Who benefits:** A total of nearly 1 million workers – over 970,000 – who will run out of federal emergency extensions (EUC) by June will qualify for an extension of jobless benefits under the extended benefits program if all states enact it.
- **The urgency to act:** In all high-unemployment states, the federally-funded extended benefits will be available to all private sector workers – 95% of the unemployment insurance case load – who exhaust EUC and begin their extended benefits in 2009. States have the option to sunset the legislation in late 2009, after which the 100% federal funding provision expires.

“Many states have overlooked this unique chance to help long term jobless workers and funnel more federal stimulus into their economies. They need to act now because time is of the essence: thousands of workers will run out of jobless benefits in a matter of weeks. It would be a shame – and devastating for thousands of workers – if states sit on their hands,” Owens concluded.

For more information on the Extended Benefits program, including a state-by-state breakdown of the potential impact the program would have around the country, view NELP's Extended Benefits analysis: <http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/extended.benefits.feb.09.pdf?nocdn=1>

Workers can find out whether their state qualifies for EB under the different “trigger” formulas at the U.S. Department of Labor at http://ows.doleta.gov/unemploy/claims_arch.asp under “Extended Benefits Trigger Notice.”

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