



**National Employment Law Project**

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## **New York State Provides Critical Support to Unemployed by Enacting Extended Benefits**

### **MORE STEPS NECESSARY TO HELP JOBLESS WORKERS**

New York - Today the National Employment Law Project lauded the New York State Legislature and Governor Paterson for enacting legislation that would take maximum advantage of federal stimulus funds to help the unemployed. Most importantly, A. 8273/S.4110-A immediately extends unemployment benefits for jobless workers on the verge of exhausting them next week. The Extended Benefits provision is a 13-week extension of unemployment compensation federally funded under the recovery package, available to states with unemployment rates exceeding 6.5%. New York's unemployment rate in March was 7.8% - and with 140,000 New Yorkers expected to exhaust their long-term benefits between now and the end of the year, the legislative support comes at a critical time. In addition, A. 8273/S.4110-A makes common sense changes that make the UI program available for women and part-time workers and qualify the state for \$412 million in federal incentive awards that can be used to stabilize and improve the program.

"Swiftly following action by the State Senate on Monday and State Assembly yesterday, Governor Paterson and the Legislature are to be commended for supporting unemployed New Yorkers today and into the future. An additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits for jobless workers is the difference between losing your apartment and being able to stay afloat while looking for that next paycheck. The Legislature and Governor are doing the right thing for workers and the state's economy," said **Andrew Stettner, Deputy Director of the National Employment Law Project.**

"It makes abundant sense for New York to clarify its unemployment rules so that part-time workers and workers facing family emergencies can count on support from the unemployment insurance program. Not only will these changes provide critical support for families, but they will draw down a \$412 million federal grant to the state's unemployment insurance trust fund," continued Stettner.

Now that the state has acted to maximize federal support for the unemployed, there are urgent priorities for further action.

"New York State's jobless benefits are a maximum of \$405 per week – just 26.7% of the average worker's paycheck. The state has not adjusted unemployment assistance in almost a decade, since 2000, in which time the cost of living in New York City has risen by 30% and 24% nationwide. At its current level, the weekly benefit is hardly enough to keep struggling families from slipping into poverty, or worse," Stettner said.

Jobless workers laid off in New Jersey qualify for up to \$584 per week, \$519 per week in Connecticut, \$558 per week in Pennsylvania and \$628 per week in Massachusetts. The only other state that replaces a lesser percentage of the average salary is Alaska.

"This recession has made it clear that New Yorkers need a genuine unemployment system to fall back on, and the current system fails to meet that promise. The clock is ticking. We commend the Governor and Legislature for taking a key step today, and now Albany should continue to upgrade the safety net to meet the challenge of this unprecedented recession," Stettner concluded.

For more on New York's unemployment system, visit: [www.nelp.org](http://www.nelp.org)

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