

February 17, 2010



**Preserve a Vital Safety Net for Laid-Off Workers:
Support Extension of Unemployment Benefits through the End of 2010**

Dear Senator,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to immediately enact a stand-alone continuation of the jobless aid provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act through the end of the year. Current extensions of these provisions expire February 28. If Congress does not act immediately, states will begin implementing the required shut down of these programs this week.

The Leadership Conference believes that extending unemployment benefits will help the economy recover while providing badly needed assistance in today's historic economic crisis. These benefits are especially important now because more than 40 percent of all unemployed workers are still struggling to find work after six months, and more than six jobless workers are competing for every job opening.¹

Minorities and older Americans are more likely to be unemployed longer. In 2006, the average duration of joblessness for unemployed whites over age 16 was 15.6 weeks; for African Americans, it was 20.4 weeks; for Asians, 21.3 weeks. Women and men aged 55 to 64 remained jobless 22.2 weeks and 23.8 weeks, respectively, in 2006.

While the jobless aid provided by the Recovery Act and subsequent extensions of jobless benefits and subsidized COBRA coverage has been significant, the decision of Congress to adopt limited extensions of the programs has caused severe hardship, both for unemployed workers and the state systems that are struggling with severely outdated equipment and insufficient staff and resources to process over 10 million unemployment checks each week.

As recently documented by the Congressional Budget Office, the extension of jobless aid also provides the most significant boost to the economy and job growth of any policy option being debated by Congress, responsible for creating 800,000 jobs this year alone. In addition to providing an urgent safety net for laid-off workers, the extension of unemployment benefits will have a positive ripple effect on the economy at large. Economists say that for each dollar spent on unemployment benefits, \$1.90 is generated in economic stimulus.

The House-passed bill and the pending Senate bill do not fund these programs through the end of the year. Given the severity of the crisis and latest evidence of the problems associated with a short-term continuation of the program, these limited extensions of jobless aid can no longer be sustained. Short-term extensions simply do not measure up to the realities facing unemployed workers in today's economy or to the serious challenges facing the state agencies that process the benefits. Without even the minimal

¹ National Employment Law Project analysis, <http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/PR.arra.reauthorization.feb.2010.pdf?nocdn=1>, February 4, 2010.



income that unemployment insurance benefits provide, the risks to family stability, health, and safety are dangerously high.

Accordingly, we call on Congress to enact a stand-alone continuation of the jobless aid provisions of the Recovery Act as its first measure of business when it returns from recess, and to continue the program through the end of the year.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions, please contact Corrine Yu, Senior Counsel, 202-466-5670, or Nancy Zirkin at 202-263-2880.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President



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If a letter requires more than one page, and a paragraph must be split, leave at least two lines of the paragraph at the bottom of the previous page. Also, do not carry over fewer than two lines of a paragraph to the next page.

Leave two line spaces between the text of the letter and the complimentary close, and allow four lines of space for the signature. Initials are to be one line below the typed name and title.

Complimentary Close,

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Title

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Initials

Enclosure