



National Employment Law Project

From the National Employment Law Project

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Press Contact: Tim Bradley, 314.440.9936; Anna Deknatel, 646.200.5311

Workers contact: unemployedworkers@gmail.com or 212-285-3025 x 309

NELP STATEMENT ON MARCH EMPLOYMENT REPORT

Washington, DC – Long-term unemployment pushed well past all-time highs in March, as modest payroll growth was unable to move the unemployment rate below 9.7%, the Labor Department report revealed today. There is now a record 6.5 million Americans who have been looking for work for more than six months – a stunning 44% of all jobless workers. Even though payrolls registered the largest one month gain (165,000) in two and a half years, there is still much work to be done to reduce unemployment and bolster the job market, the National Employment Law Project said today.

“Americans are right to be relieved about the upturn in March’s payroll report from the Labor Department. But March’s encouraging jobs gains barely register in the battle against severe joblessness. For those laid off, unemployment is stretching longer and longer and putting severe distress on families. Throughout 2010, we are going to have to contend with extremely high unemployment. The long slog of looking for work and surviving on jobless benefits is going to continue for millions of Americans. It’s Congress’ job now to take effective and aggressive steps to create jobs and extend unemployment through the end of the year, so that the economy can get back on its feet,” said **Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project.**

As further evidence of the severe nature of joblessness, the average duration of unemployment is now 31.2 weeks and 11.2 million jobless workers are collecting unemployment insurance, with six million relying on some form of federal extended benefits.

Because Congress failed to extend the deadline to apply for federal jobless benefits last week, April 5th marks the cut-off for benefit checks for hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers. Approximately one million unemployed workers will lose benefits in April should Congress not extend the provisions; as many as 212,000 will lose benefits next week alone.

NELP’s state-by-state estimates of “**Workers Prematurely Cut-Off of Federal Jobless Benefits During April 2010 Due to Expiration of the Recovery Act’s UI Provisions**” can be found [here](#).

The controversy and delay in passing another stopgap extension was unnecessary and unjustifiable. In March, the Senate passed with bi-partisan support a bill to extend

unemployment benefits and COBRA programs through December 31st, called the American Workers State and Business Relief Act. The House has also approved a longer extension than the pending 30-day stop-gap measure, and the two bills are awaiting reconciliation when the current Congressional recess is over.

“We urge Congress to extend federal jobless benefits through 2010 as soon as it returns from recess. And even as these jobless benefits keep families afloat and stimulate local economies, we are going to need more bold action from Washington to turn the ship around. The jobs crisis is a crisis for all Americans, employed and unemployed alike – so hopefully when Congress returns from recess, it will move past pointing fingers and playing games, and confront the national jobs emergency,” said Owens. “There is no more important work for Congress now than to put America back to work.”

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