



National Employment Law Project

From the National Employment Law Project

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NELP STATEMENT:
CONGRESS HOLDS UP JOBLESS BENEFITS & COBRA
SUBSIDIES FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF
UNEMPLOYED

DEFICIT HAWKS PUT ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND FAMILIES IN PERIL

Washington, DC – Today the National Employment Law Project released the following statement as Congress failed to extend federal unemployment insurance programs that expire June 2nd and chose to interrupt benefits for hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers as lawmakers head into a weeklong recess. As many as 1.2 million jobless workers will be cut off from federal unemployment benefits in June should Congress fail to extend provisions.

“Hundreds of thousands of jobless workers are heading into Memorial Day weekend knowing they will be cut off from benefits because Congress failed to renew key provisions of the recovery act. Deficit hawks in Congress are playing with fire by pulling the plug on COBRA benefits for unemployed workers and allowing the extension of jobless to expire once again. The fragile recovery needs fuel to feed the economy's halting job creation engine. Allowing programs to expire is a choice by lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to inflict immediate and lasting injury on thousands of workers – and their children – during the worst job market the nation has experienced in 70 years,” said **Andrew Stettner, Deputy Director of the National Employment Law Project.**

While the House passed a dramatically curtailed extension today, it lacks federal subsidies for COBRA payments for millions depending on them, and the Senate will not even pick up the legislation until it returns from recess on June 7th. Since March, Congress has failed to act on legislation to extend benefits for the long-term unemployed to the end of the year.

“For millions of workers, there has been no economic recovery. There is still only one job opening for every 5.6 unemployed workers, long-term unemployment is at an all-time high of 46%, and the average duration of unemployment is 33 weeks long. In an unemployment crisis like this the basic program of six months of state benefits is not enough – and it would be unprecedented for Congress to turn its back on the long-term unemployed,” continued

Stettner.

“The people who rely on unemployment benefits – to keep a roof over their head, to keep food on table – are people who have already proven that they lost their jobs through no fault of their own, were significantly attached to the labor force before losing their jobs, and they continually certify and prove that they are actively looking for work. We save nothing by holding up jobless benefits – we only exacerbate the jobs crisis and put America further from economic recovery,” said Stettner.

On Monday, NELP released a paper that debunks the argument and myth that extending UI benefits prolongs the duration of unemployment: “**Beyond Sound Bites: Understanding the Real Impact of Unemployment Insurance on the Severity of Unemployment** <<http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/DisincentiveUI.pdf>> .”

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