

February 18, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
S-23- Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
S-321 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jon Kyl
United States Senate
S-208 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus
United States Senate
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
United States House of Representatives
H-204 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
United States House of Representatives
H-107 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor
United States House of Representatives
H-307 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel
United States House of Representatives
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Camp
United States House of Representatives
341 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James McDermott
United States House of Representatives
1035 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Linder
United States House of Representatives
1026 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders:

We are writing to strongly urge the Senate and the House of Representatives to act immediately to continue the Recovery Act's aid to the jobless as a stand-alone measure through the end of 2010.

Congress and President Obama took bold action one year ago to enact major benefits for today's jobless families, including the extension of jobless benefits and subsidized COBRA coverage. Subsequent expansions of the program, including the 14-20 week expansion of Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC), have also gone a long way to respond to the severity of the crisis of long-term unemployment that has now gripped the nation, with more than 40% of all unemployed workers still struggling to find work after six months and more than six unemployed workers looking for every available job.

While the jobless aid provided by the Recovery Act has been significant, the decision of Congress to adopt limited extensions of the program have 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. Indeed, as result of the limited two-month extension that expires February 28th starting in the week of February 15th, the states will be forced to spend time and resources they can ill-afford to waste notifying workers that the extended UI programs are shutting down. They will also need to start reprogramming their computers to implement the required shut-down as of March 1st.

If Congress does not take final action by February 22nd, the states will no longer be in a position to reverse the process and there will be mass confusion among desperate workers whose only means to pay their groceries and housing is their limited unemployment benefits. Moreover, the delay will wreak havoc on the state agencies as a result of the extra work required to shut down the programs and the immediate need to respond to the flood of phone calls that will start coming in from panicked workers.

By every economic indicator, the extension of jobless aid provided by the Recovery Act should continue through the end of year. 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. It provides \$1.90 in stimulus for every dollar spent, and will be responsible for creating 800,000 jobs this year alone. In spite of the importance of this program, the House of Representatives passed a jobs bill in December that includes an extension of jobless aid only through June and the recent draft of the Senate jobs bill only continues the program through May.

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. These 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.

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.

Sincerely,

9to5 Atlanta
9to5 Bay Area (CA)
9to5 Colorado
9to5 Los Angeles
9to5 Milwaukee
9to5, National Association of Working Women
AFT Pennsylvania
Agenda for Children
American Friends Service Committee
Americans Association of University Women
Americans for Democratic Action
ARC Group Homes, Inc.
Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Miller International Union Local 6, AFL-CIO
Bucks County Central Labor Council
California State Association of Counties
Cambridge United for Justice with Peace
Campaign for America's Future
Center for Community Change
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center of Hope
Change to Win
Chester County Central Labor Council
Coalition for Justice
Coalition on Human Needs
Collaborative Center for Justice
Coloradans For Immigrant Rights, a project of the American Friends Service Committee
Common Cause
Common Good, Common Wealth - Pittsburgh
Community Action New Mexico
Community Action Partnership
Community Legal Services, Inc., Philadelphia
Connecticut Association of Nonprofits
Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.
Connecticut Voices for Children
Cortland Area Child Care Council
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Covering Kentucky Kids and Families

D.C. Employment Justice Center
Delaware County Central Labor Council
Dominican Sisters of Adrian
East Bay Center
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
1199 NUHHCE, AFSCME/AFL-CIO
EMMAUS MISSION CENTER/ EL PUENTE
Exodus Ministries, Inc.
Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc
First Focus Campaign for Children
Five County Association of Governments
Florida Legal Services
Food Research and Action Center
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Georgia Rural Urban Summit
Greater Boston Legal Services, Employment Law Unit
Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc.
Green Tree Federation of Teachers and Support Staff
Half in Ten
Harvest America Corporation
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
Homeless Veteran's Reintegration Program
Human Services Coalition of Oregon
Idaho Community Action Network
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
Immokalee Multicultural Multipurpose Community Action Agency
Influence State Policy
Institute Justice Team, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Interfaith Council of Amador
Interfaith Worker Justice
Local Union 126, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of
America
Jewish Labor Committee
Jobs With Justice
Karen Lee, Commissioner, Washington State Employment Security Department
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Knoxville- Knox County Community Action Committee
Laborers International Union Local 135
Legal Aid Justice Center
Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut
Legal Momentum
Lincoln Tech Federation of Teachers
Lorton Community Action Center

Love Our Children USA
Lutheran Metro Ministry
Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Methodist Healthcare Ministries
Michigan Alliance of Cooperatives
Michigan League for Human Services
Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network
Missouri Association for Community Action
MomsRising
Mon Valley Unemployed Committee
Montgomery County Central Labor Council, PA
Montgomery County Community Action Development Commission
Morris Heights Health Center
NAACP
Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter, Inc.
Nashville Homeless Power Project
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of Social Workers Council of Chapter Executives
National Association of Social Workers, West Virginia Chapter
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National Jobs for All Coalition
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Priorities Project
National Rural Social Work Caucus
National Skills Coalition
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NC Justice Center
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Haven Legal Assistance Association, Inc.
New Haven Legal Association, Inc.
New Haven Peoples Center
New Jersey Tenants Organization
New Mexico Voices for Children
New York City Coalition Against Hunger
NW Bronx For Change
Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks
PA Coalition to End Homelessness
PA United for Single-Payer Healthcare
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry
Pennsylvania NOW
People Incorporated of Virginia
People of Faith CT
Philadelphia Unemployment Project
Pittsburgh Community Services, Inc.
Pottstown Federation of Teachers
ProgressOhio
Providence Connections Inc.
Public Justice Center
Resources for Children's Health
RESULTS, Inc.
RESULTS, Kalamazoo
RESULTS, Sante Fe
Roots of Promise, a project of the Thomas Merton Center
Samaritan Center for Transitional Housing
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Service Employees International Union
Service Employees International Union, Local 668
Single Stop USA
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Justice Team
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Leadership Team
Sisters of St. Francis
Sisters of the Good Shepherd
Soup Kitchen & Shelter, Inc.
Southeastern Pennsylvania Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees Chapter 31-9 South Chicago
Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice
The Campaign for Community Change
The Every Child Matters Education Fund
The Leadership Council of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
The Marianists
The National Community Reinvestment Coalition
The Xaverian Brothers
Thomas BC Rogers & Project Community
Tri-County Area Local of Postal Workers Union
UHURU-Community Development Corporation
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United for a Fair Economy
United Labor Council of Reading and Berks County
United Steelworkers
United Way of Delaware County

United Way of the Midlands
USAction
Washington Community Action Network
Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
Washington State Employment Security Department
West Baton Rouge Parish Community Action
West Side Campaign Against Hunger
Wisconsin State AFL-CIO
Women Employed
Women's Coalition of Washington
Women's Law Project
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Woodhaven Federation of Teachers
Working America
WV Citizen Action Group
Wyoming Coalition for the Homeless
York County School of Technology Federation of Teachers