



February 5, 2014

Support Restoration of Unemployment Insurance

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, we urge you to support the retroactive restoration of the federal emergency unemployment insurance (UI) program. This proposal will alleviate hardship for the most vulnerable while fostering economic growth for all.

The unemployment insurance program expired nearly five weeks ago, putting millions of vulnerable workers and families at risk. Every week that renewal of UI is delayed will deny assistance to another 72,000 people; in all, another 3.6 million will lose access to benefits by the end of 2014. Never before has Congress allowed unemployment insurance extensions to expire with the long-term unemployment rate – today at 38 percent – so high. Nor has the nation ever ended these weeks of benefits when the proportion of long-term jobless was as high as it is now – 2.6 percent of the labor force.

Unemployment insurance remains a crucial source of protection for unemployed workers. In 2012, it kept 2.5 million people, including 600,000 children, out of poverty. In addition to providing an urgent safety net, UI provides a boost to the economy because the money is usually quickly spent, particularly by the long-term unemployed.

Federal unemployment insurance supports the unemployed jobseekers, keeps millions of Americans out of poverty, and spurs economic growth. The failure of Congress to restore unemployment benefits would be unprecedented in the history of federal responses to high unemployment following economic recessions. Notably, 68 percent of Americans support extending the time limit for unemployment benefits for the unemployed during economic downturns.

For these reasons, we urge you to support the retroactive reinstatement of unemployment insurance. This vital form of relief will help the most vulnerable Americans while also helping to sustain our country's recovery. If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Zirkin at 202-263-2880 or Rob Randhava, Senior Counsel at 202-466-6058.

Sincerely,

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