

December 2, 2009

Senator Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
361A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative John Boehner
House Minority Leader
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Max Baucus
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Congressman Jim McDermott
Chair, Income Security and Family Support Subcommittee
1035 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders:

In February 2009, you enacted the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), a sweeping piece of legislation that has helped this country finally emerge from the recession. In particular, the ARRA provided a vital lifeline of support to millions of unemployed workers throughout the country. The unemployment insurance benefits and additional supports for the unemployed that you have provided have kept millions in their homes, helped them afford to maintain health insurance, enabled them to keep feeding their families, and provided much needed economic stimulus to their local communities.

As you are no doubt aware, the crucial unemployment insurance benefits provided through the ARRA are set to expire at the end of this year. If Congress does not act swiftly to extend these unemployment benefits and additional supports for unemployed workers through 2010, it will be a desperate blow to the economy, and equally important, an even more desperate blow to the millions of workers,

unemployed through no fault of their own, who depend on these vital benefits to maintain the basic necessities of life.

The National Employment Law Project (NELP) projects that in January alone, 1.1 million workers will lose access to jobless benefits. This is a combined estimate of exhaustions from state-provided benefits and federally-funded extensions. Between January and March, the number without federal jobless benefits is expected to swell to nearly three million workers if the ARRA is not reauthorized. Equally devastating, if the ARRA provisions for unemployed workers are not extended, any worker who loses their job on or after January 1, 2010, will have nothing beyond the 26 weeks of state benefits for which they might be eligible. Congress has clearly recognized that in this current recession, that level of benefits is not sufficient support for unemployed workers and their families.

In addition to losing the extended unemployment benefits, workers will no longer qualify for the COBRA subsidy program when it expires in December, receive the extra \$25 /week in jobless benefits provided under ARRA, or be able to take advantage of the federal income tax holiday on the first \$2400 of unemployment benefits they receive during the calendar year.

The impact of such an expiration of unemployment benefits and additional supports for unemployed workers would be devastating to workers and their local communities. We know that unemployment is likely to remain high throughout all of 2010, and the workers who lost their jobs in the second half of the recession deserve no less support than those who lost their jobs during the first half.

Millions of families throughout the country are counting on Congress to do the right thing – to extend the ARRA's package of unemployment benefits and programs for unemployed workers through the end of 2010. There is no better holiday present you can send to your constituents this year.

The undersigned organizations call upon you to ensure that this vital safety net continues in 2010, without delay or interruption. The innocent victims of this recession deserve no less.

Sincerely,

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AFSCME
AFL-CIO
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of Teachers
Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.
Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Carver Terrace Family Community Fellowship

Center for Community Change
Center for Law and Social Policy, CLASP
Coalition on Human Needs
Communication Workers of America (CWA)
Community Action Partnership
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO
First Focus Campaign for Children
Green for All
Half in Ten
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), AFL-CIO, CLC
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)
Legal Momentum
Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO
The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Social Workers
National Community Reinvestment Coalition
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Women's Law Center
OMB Watch
RESULTS
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Steelworkers
USAction
Wider Opportunities for Women