



National Employment Law Project

Center for American Progress Action Fund



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New Labor Department Reports Show Major Increase in State Unemployment & Surge in Workers Running Out of State Jobless Benefits: Senate Must Act to Expand Federal Support When Congress Reconvenes

Today, the Labor Department released the latest monthly report on state joblessness, showing a major increase in unemployment across every region of the U.S. In addition, new government data released this week document a surge in the number of workers running out of their 26 weeks of state jobless benefits. More than one million Americans will run out of their limited 13 weeks of federal jobless benefits before the year ends, requiring immediate action to expand jobless benefits when Congress reconvenes November 17th.

As of September, the Labor Department reported that there were 11 states – California, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Tennessee – with especially high levels of unemployment exceeding 7.0 percent, up from 8 states last month and 1 state in January 2008. Moreover, 15 states now have unemployment rates exceeding 6.5 percent, double the number in just the past 3 months. Over the past year, all but 3 states have experienced increases in unemployment, averaging an increase of 1.2 percentage points.

In states across the U.S., unemployment rates have now surpassed the record levels dating back to the recession of the 1990s, including several Southern states (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina), Northeast states (Rhode Island), Midwest states (Illinois, Michigan, Ohio), and West Coast states (California, Nevada).

This week, the Labor Department also reported that over 300,000 workers ran out of their 26 weeks of state jobless benefits in September, an increase of 58 percent in the past year. According to Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project, "the latest state reports underscore the critical need for the Senate to expand jobless benefits as soon as it reconvenes and help stabilize the state economies."

Before the Congressional recess, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to expand jobless benefits. "Unemployment Insurance makes a big difference for people trying to support their families while they look for work. With the economy losing jobs, and long term joblessness increasing as a result, the Senate should act right away to extend benefits and keep hundreds of thousands of families from falling into poverty," said Lisa Donner, Executive Director of the Center for American Progress Action Fund "Half in Ten" campaign.

Teresa Metzger is a laid off worker in Georgia, a state that reached a 16-year-high unemployment rate of 6.5 percent. Struggling to avoid eviction and to care for her two young children, Ms. Metzger wrote Georgia Senator Johnny Isakson to support Senate action expanding jobless benefits: "I am no stranger to hard work, as I have been working steadily since the very young age of 13. I have contributed hundreds of dollars to social security and paid thousands in taxes. All I am asking for is the favor to be returned. . . . I cannot believe that there is any hesitation to passing such a bill to support American workers who are the backbone of this country. Haven't we suffered enough?"

For more information on the Labor Department's September report on joblessness and on state breakdowns on the number of workers exhausting their state and federal jobless benefits, see the attached table.

To set up an interview with a National Employment Law Project spokesperson, please contact Jeanine Plant at 646-265-7721. To speak with Lisa Donner of the Center for American Progress, please contact John Neurohr at 202-481-8182.

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September 2008 State Unemployment Figures

State	State Unemployment Rate		Workers Exhausting State Unemployment Benefits		Projected Workers Exhausting Federal Benefits
	September-08	One Year Percentage Point Increase	September-08	One Year Increase	October-December 2008
Alabama	5.3	1.8	3,508	82%	11,120
Alaska	6.8	0.5	1,033	35%	5,752
Arizona	5.9	2.1	5,957	74%	15,623
Arkansas	4.9	-0.6	2,362	-1%	10,892
California	7.7	2.1	48,403	65%	200,929
Colorado	5.2	1.2	3,222	47%	12,204
Connecticut	6.1	1.5	3,700	11%	15,816
Delaware	4.8	1.5	976	86%	3,669
Dist. of Columbia	7	1.3	757	10%	3,249
Florida	6.6	2.4	23,210	108%	66,712
Georgia	6.5	2.0	10,714	91%	32,340
Hawaii	4.5	1.7	901	128%	2,405
Idaho	5	2.3	1,293	147%	5,888
Illinois	6.9	1.7	13,800	51%	52,955
Indiana	6.2	1.7	8,090	51%	32,408
Iowa	4.2	0.4	1,657	23%	8,759
Kansas	4.8	0.8	2,562	98%	7,728
Kentucky	7.1	1.7	2,811	61%	9,748
Louisiana	5.2	1.3	4,088	139%	8,745
Maine	5.6	0.7	965	75%	4,311
Maryland	4.6	1.0	4,253	99%	14,401
Massachusetts	5.3	0.9	9,078	68%	32,474
Michigan	8.7	1.4	13,326	35%	57,994
Minnesota	5.9	1.3	3,448	9%	19,761
Mississippi	7.8	1.5	1,866	42%	6,851
Missouri	6.4	1.1	4,579	58%	18,309
Montana	4.6	1.4	578	90%	2,944
Nebraska	3.5	0.4	1,219	44%	5,497
Nevada	7.3	2.3	4,710	143%	13,954
New Hampshire	4.1	0.7	670	125%	2,019
New Jersey	5.8	1.6	14,953	49%	56,097
New Mexico	4	0.6	753	-21%	5,269
New York	5.8	1.3	16,545	46%	70,426
North Carolina	7	2.3	11,800	54%	42,772
North Dakota	3.6	0.3	187	47%	1,574
Ohio	7.2	1.5	9,223	64%	34,389
Oklahoma	3.8	-0.5	1,377	-3%	6,111
Oregon	6.4	1.1	5,252	93%	18,208
Pennsylvania	5.7	1.3	13,107	38%	56,465
Rhode Island	8.8	3.7	1,897	84%	7,181
South Carolina	7.3	1.4	5,285	77%	18,147
South Dakota	3.2	0.3	71	37%	331
Tennessee	7.2	2.3	5,926	63%	20,628
Texas	5.1	0.8	11,877	40%	44,298
Utah	3.5	0.7	1,271	166%	3,672
Vermont	5.2	1.3	400	71%	1,756
Virginia	4.3	1.2	4,300	63%	15,923
Washington	5.8	1.2	4,024	67%	14,985
West Virginia	4.5	-0.2	978	37%	4,077
Wisconsin	5	0.1	6,504	26%	28,400
Wyoming	3.3	0.4	245	64%	1,208

Sources: US Department of Labor and NELP estimates based on Department of Labor Data.