



For Immediate Release
October 8, 2009

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SENATORS INTRODUCE COMPREHENSIVE FUNDING PROPOSAL FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

*Reid, Baucus, Reed, Shaheen Extension is Fully Paid For, Adds Weeks for Workers at Risk
of Exhausting Benefits and High Unemployment States*

Washington, DC – Today, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) introduced a comprehensive proposal to extend unemployment insurance by up to 14 additional weeks for jobless workers in all 50 states. Nearly two million out-of-work Americans face expiring benefits by the end of the year.

The legislation would also extend benefits for six additional weeks in states with unemployment levels over eight and a half percent. The proposal is fully paid for by extending the Federal Unemployment Tax through June 30, 2011.

“Chairman Baucus and I worked with our colleagues Senators Reed and Shaheen for the last two weeks to broker an agreement that provides critical assistance to unemployed workers across the nation,” said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. **“This agreement recognizes the need to extend unemployment benefits for workers in every state whose unemployment benefits have run out or will do so in the next several weeks. More important for Nevadans, our compromise recognizes that workers in the hardest-hit states have even greater challenges finding work and are in the greatest need of assistance. Under this agreement, workers in these hardest-hit states will receive an additional six weeks of benefits. I encourage my Republican colleagues to join with us in supporting this compromise to provide much needed relief to the millions of Americans struggling to find work.”**

“As of last month, 15 million unemployed Americans were competing for three million available jobs. Too many Americans are unemployed right now, and states are struggling to pick up the slack. Today is an important step in the right direction to offer support to our unemployed,” said Baucus. **“The economy is stabilizing and will come around on the strength and innovation of American goods and services, but it will take time and the toil of government and business working together to help millions of workers and families pull themselves out of hardship. We are committed to this goal and urge our colleagues to take action on this bill.”**

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“It is imperative that we pass this bill now and extend unemployment insurance benefits to help the millions of jobless Americans who have been laid off through no fault of their own. People who have spent their whole lives working hard are struggling to find jobs amidst the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Helping these families stay afloat is not a partisan issue. It is an urgent national issue that demands action now,” said Reed.

“This is good news for jobless workers in New Hampshire and all across the country who want to get back to work, but face a job market where there are six unemployed workers for every job opening,” said Shaheen. **“Unemployed workers use these benefits to buy essentials and pay the bills. Extending unemployment benefits is one of the most effective actions we can take to stimulate the economy. I want to thank Senators Reid, Baucus, and Reed for their commitment to passing a fair extension of benefits for workers in all 50 states.”**

The proposal includes a modification to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to allow families receiving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or food stamps, to remain eligible while receiving an additional \$25 per week in unemployment insurance benefits. The bill would also update the Unemployment Insurance Modernization provision in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to allow victims of sexual assault who have left their job to be eligible for benefits under the “compelling family reasons” clause. Additionally, the legislation specifies railroad workers facing expiring unemployment benefits would be eligible for additional weeks.

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