

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