

September 12, 2007

Dear Member of Congress,

As organizations that promote fair treatment and economic opportunity for women, we are writing to express our support for The Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act, H.R. 2233 and S. 1871.

When workers are laid off or must leave their jobs through no fault of their own, unemployment insurance (UI) offers vital temporary income support. Unfortunately, many women in the workforce are currently ineligible for unemployment insurance, because of inequities in the program's design.

The Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act offers financial incentives for states to bring their unemployment insurance programs into alignment with our 21st century economy. The bills encourage reforms of eligibility criteria and benefit structure to better serve today's workforce. Many of these reforms are of special importance to working women. They include:

- **Providing benefits to workers who are only available for part-time work:** Women comprise 70% of the part-time workforce, but are ineligible for unemployment benefits in most states unless they are able to look for full-time work. H.R. 2233 and S. 1871 would encourage states to extend UI eligibility to workers looking for part-time jobs.
- **Enabling workers who must leave jobs for compelling family reasons to qualify for UI benefits:** Some states deny benefits to workers who have to leave their job for compelling family reasons, such as fleeing domestic violence, needing to care for a sick or disabled relative, or moving with a spouse who has found a new job in another area, even when the worker is again seeking employment. These disqualifications disproportionately impact women.
- **Considering a worker's most recent work history when determining eligibility:** To be eligible to receive UI benefits, a claimant must have a specified amount of earnings during a specific set of months prior to her job termination. Depending on how the state defines this period and when a worker files her claim, between three to six months of her most recent earnings may be discarded in determining her eligibility and benefit level. This particularly disadvantages women, including low-wage workers who have recently left welfare and joined the workforce. H.R. 2233 and S. 1871 would encourage states to use more recent earnings to calculate benefit eligibility.

- **Helping families with children:** The Senate bill, S. 1871, encourages states to boost weekly benefits for unemployed workers who are caring for children or other dependents.

We urge Congress to pass this important legislation to modernize the Unemployment Insurance system. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Joan Entmacher at the National Women's Law Center, 202-588-5180, or any of our organizations.

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women, Denver, CO  
 AARP, Washington, DC  
 American Association of University Women, Washington, DC  
 Black Women's Health Imperative, Washington, DC  
 Business and Professional Women/USA, Washington, DC  
 California Women's Law Center, Los Angeles, CA  
 Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Washington, DC  
 Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, Brookline, MA  
 Center on Women and Public Policy, Minneapolis, MN  
 Clearinghouse on Women's Issues, Washington, DC  
 Coalition on Human Needs, Washington, DC  
 DC Employment Justice Center, Washington, DC  
 Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO, Washington, DC  
 Family Voices, Newark, NJ  
 Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA), New York, NY  
 Georgia Employee Federation, Atlanta, GA  
 Girls Inc. of Central Ohio, Gahanna, OH  
 Grandview Investigations, West Homestead, PA  
 Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston, MA  
 Harlem Tenants Council, New York, NY  
 Hawaii Women Work!, Honolulu, HI  
 Institute for Teaching and Research on Women, Towson, MD  
 Kellogg Community College, Battle Creek, MI  
 Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center, San Francisco, CA  
 Maine Center for Economic Policy, Augusta, ME  
 Maine Women's Journal, Yarmouth, ME  
 Maine Women's Lobby, Hallowell, ME  
 MOTHERS (Mothers Ought To Have Equal Rights), Jericho, NY  
 National Association of Mothers' Centers, Jericho, NY  
 National Council for Research on Women, New York, NY  
 National Council of Jewish Women, New York, NY  
 National Council of Women's Organizations, Washington, DC  
 National Organization for Women, Washington, DC  
 National Partnership for Women & Families, Washington, DC  
 National Research Center for Women & Families, Washington, DC  
 National Women's Law Center, Washington, DC

Northwest Women's Law Center, Seattle, WA  
OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women, Arlington, VA  
PathWaysPA, Holmes, PA  
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN), Reno, NV  
Public Justice Center, Baltimore, MD  
Ret. Research Foundation, Evanston, IL  
Sojourner Truth Center for Interactive Justice, St. Petersburg, FL  
South Dakota Advocacy Network for Women, Sioux Falls, SD  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc., Newark, NJ  
Stotter Consulting, Bloomsburg, PA  
Take Care Net, University Park, PA  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries, Cleveland, OH  
YWCA of Western Massachusetts, Springfield, MA  
Wider Opportunities for Women, Washington, DC  
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, Madison, Wisconsin  
Women's Commission, Cambridge, MA  
Women's Committee of 100, Washington, DC  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, US Section, Philadelphia, PA  
Women Employed, Chicago, IL  
Women Empowered Against Violence, Inc. (WEAVE), Washington, DC  
The Women's Foundation of California, San Francisco, CA  
Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc., Towson, MD  
Women's Law Project, Philadelphia, PA  
Women's Research & Education Institute (WREI), Arlington, VA  
Women Work New York State, Hempstead, NY  
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment, Washington, DC