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## New Poll Finds Strong Voter Support for Renewing Federal Jobless Aid

*Sen. Jack Reed, Rep. Sandy Levin Call for Immediate Action to Renew Emergency Unemployment Insurance*

Washington, DC—A clear majority of Americans support maintaining federal jobless aid for the long-term unemployed, according to a poll by Hart Research Associates. The [poll results](#) were released on a press call hosted by the National Employment Law Project during which Senator Jack Reed and Representative Sandy Levin called on Congress to renew Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC). Due to Congress's failure to renew EUC before the holiday break, the program will expire on December 28<sup>th</sup>, immediately shutting off benefits to 1.3 million long-term unemployed workers who will be left without any form of jobless aid. By mid-2014, another 1.9 million long-term unemployed workers and their families will have no federal unemployment aid once their state benefits end.

"At a time when many of us are celebrating a sacred holiday marked by giving to others, it's painful that so many Americans have been left behind in the economic recovery—and deeply distressing that Congress has turned its back on them by cutting off federal jobless aid. Failing to renew emergency unemployment insurance will devastate millions of families and do real harm to the national economy," said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**. "As long as millions of long-term unemployed workers cannot find jobs, our economic recovery will fall short. Congress needs to pass legislation that invests in creating jobs, and in the meantime, we need to ensure that the millions of people out of work through no fault of their own continue to have access to this critical aid."

The [poll surveyed](#) more than 800 voters across the country and found strong support for renewing emergency unemployment insurance. According to the [poll results](#):

- Only one-third of voters believe Congress should allow federal jobless aid to end this week. By a strong 21-point margin, voters say Congress should act to maintain (55%) rather than cut off (34%) these benefits.
- There is also more intensity of feeling on the side favoring an extension. More than twice as many voters strongly favor maintaining benefits (43%) as strongly feel benefits should end (21%).
- Voters reject the claim that unemployed workers are not trying to find work. Just 33% of voters agree that most of those receiving jobless aid "are not trying to find a job, and prefer to collect benefits without working." Instead, 57% say that the unemployed "would rather work, but cannot find a job in today's economy."
- A member of Congress who opposes federal jobless aid faces an 18-point net loss of support from voters. Just 21% say that this position makes them more likely to vote for a member of Congress, while 39% are less likely to support the member's re-election (35% say it will not affect their vote).

"The poll results reflect an electorate that is still feeling the effects of a weak economy," said **Guy Molyneux, a pollster with Hart Research**. "The reality is that the unemployment crisis doesn't care whether you're a Democrat or a Republican—it's affecting everybody. So when members of Congress say that cutting off jobless aid is in the best interest of the unemployed, they sound callous and out of touch."

“We can’t let 1.3 million Americans—including 4,900 Rhode Islanders—lose this vital lifeline. The last benefit checks will go out next week, and Congress needs to quickly and retroactively address this or over one million job seekers and their families will be left out in the cold. Congress should pass the bipartisan Reed-Heller bill and provide some stability and certainty to both families in need and to our economy as a whole,” said Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island. The Reed-Heller bill, sponsored by Senator Reed and Nevada Senator Dean Heller (R), would effect a three-month temporary extension of federal jobless aid.

The share of jobless workers deemed long-term unemployed is still near record highs, with 4.1 million workers, or 37.3 percent of the nation’s 10.9 million unemployed, out of work for six months or more. With roughly three unemployed workers for every one available job opening, the job market remains tough, and especially so for the long-term unemployed. Unemployment insurance helps keep jobless workers plugged into the job search and [attached to the labor force](#), while helping them cover life’s basic expenses.

“Unemployment insurance has helped me cover my most basic expenses while I continue to search for a new job,” said **Deborah Barrett**, 57, from Rhode Island. A degreed accounting professional with 25 years of experience, Barrett was laid off from her job in February 2013. “I am an independent, self-supporting woman who is quite young for my 57 years, and a homeowner who has also been caring for my 86-year-old mother in our home, while I search for work on a full-time basis,” she said. “These modest benefits, which provide about one-third of my prior earnings, are my sole source of income while I look for work. And now these benefits will stop, due to the refusal of some lawmakers to grasp the horrific damage that will ensue. Without the continuation of federal unemployment insurance, I don’t know how I’ll be able to keep us in our home—or how we will get by until I land my next job.”

“In community after community, Americans have friends, neighbors and family whose unemployment insurance will soon completely vanish, and they overwhelmingly oppose cutting off this vital lifeline as families are still struggling to get back on their feet after the worst recession in 70 years. The clock is ticking not only for 1.3 million Americans who have been looking for work for longer than six months but tens of thousands more who each week will lose their unemployment insurance if House Republican leaders don’t agree to put an extension up for a vote,” said **Rep. Sandy Levin of Michigan, ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee**.

A failure to reauthorize EUC in 2014 will result in the [loss of around 240,000 jobs](#). Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has indicated that the first order of business when Congress returns from the holidays will be to reauthorize federal jobless aid, and the program already has the [support of several Republican lawmakers](#). The White House, which recently issued a [report](#) documenting EUC’s beneficial impact on workers, their families, and the economic recovery, also has made clear that the extension is a top administration priority.

*More resources on Emergency Unemployment Compensation:*

- [Tables: State-by-State EUC Cut-Off Numbers and EUC Benefits Paid and Jobs Saved](#) (Dec 2013)
- [Share of Unemployed Receiving Jobless Aid Will Hit Record Low if Congress Fails to Renew Federal UI](#) (Dec 18, 2013)
- [Federal Unemployment Insurance Keeps Workers in Job Search, Families Out of Poverty](#) (Dec 4, 2013)
- [U.S. Labor Market Remains in Distress, Underscores Need to Renew Federal Jobless Aid](#) (Nov 20, 2013)
- [Two Million Unemployed Will Lose Jobless Aid by Early 2014 if Congress Fails to Renew](#) (Nov 06, 2013)

*The National Employment Law Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts research and advocates on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers. For more about NELP, visit [www.nelp.org](http://www.nelp.org).*

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