



# Action Alert!

## Help Families Maintain Unemployment Assistance!

July 19, 2010



**Summary:** As early as **tomorrow, July 20**, the Senate will vote on extending unemployment insurance benefits through November. Sixty votes are needed for cloture, which will stop a threatened filibuster, and allow the bill to be signed into law. In the last 48 days, nearly 2 million families have lost the financial support afforded them by unemployment insurance as a minority in Congress have refused to extend benefits.

**Background:** The nation continues to recover from the recession that began in 2007, which is one of the worst economic periods for American families since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The national unemployment rate continues to hover near ten percent; 15 million Americans are officially unemployed; and 44 percent (six million people) have been out of work for more than six months. This is the highest number of long-term unemployed since the United States began keeping that data in 1948. For every job opening, there are five applicants.

Since the recession began, the U.S. economy has lost 8.5 million jobs, which means with new entrants to the workforce, eleven million new jobs must be created to return to the pre-recession unemployment rate of five percent. Although the economy has begun creating jobs, it will take a long time for jobs to be available for all workers who want them.

**Catholic Social Teaching:** The Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development put forth the following six moral criteria for job creation and economic recovery legislation:

- 1) *Respect for life and dignity:* Do policy initiatives respect and enhance the life and dignity of all? Do programs for education and job creation recognize and affirm the diversity of gifts and talents each person has to contribute to the common good?
- 2) *Subsidiarity and solidarity:* Are policy initiatives and investments focused on local communities? Are they adaptable and flexible enough to respond to the needs of differing communities? Will policies lead to a shared recovery for all?
- 3) *Respect for marriage and family life:* Do federal programs provide a genuine safety net, create jobs and offer opportunities that are supportive of and strengthen quality family life? Does the policy respect and encourage family ties that are so important on matters of poverty and the economy?
- 4) *Priority for the poor and vulnerable:* Are resources and programs targeted to those most in need?
- 5) *Recognition of cultural diversity:* Do programs and initiatives recognize the particular challenges of minority communities? Do programs and initiatives reduce the systemic economic disparities experienced by minority communities?
- 6) *Right to economic initiative and productive work:* Do the policies promote just wages and benefits necessary to support both the worker and their family?

As Bishop Murphy wrote to the U.S. Senate: "Without quick Congressional action to extend these unemployment benefits and additional support through 2010, millions of workers will be left without the financial wherewithal to provide for their families. Not only would this be a horrible blow to the fragile economic recovery, it would be a tragedy for these families and the communities in which they live."

## Take Action Now!

Call your two Senators today! (Find your Senators at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).) Call their local offices or the Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121) and ask to be put through to your Senator's office. Tell them to vote for cloture and restore benefits for long term unemployed workers. Urge your Senators to help struggling families by extending unemployment insurance eligibility for laid-off workers through the end of this year.

Your calls can and will make a difference.

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