

Filner
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foster
Fox
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hereth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inlee
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee
(TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (OH)
Jordan
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Lipinski

NOT VOTING—27

Boucher
Braley (IA)

Cardoza
Cohen

Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda
T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Speier
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Tanner
Nadler
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Wasserman
Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Welch (VT)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wexler
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

Gillibrand
Hulshof
Israel
Jones (NC)
Kucinich
Linder
Loebsock

Maloney (NY)
Marshall
McCrery
Miller, George
Ortiz
Pearce
Rahall

Ruppersberger
Rush
Shea-Porter
Sutton
Tancredo
Weiner
Whitfield (KY)

□ 1515

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Byrd, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 3179. An act to amend title 40, United States Code, to authorize the use of Federal supply schedules for the acquisition of law enforcement, security, and certain other related items by State and local governments.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 634. An act to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of veterans who became disabled for life while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

EMERGENCY EXTENDED UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION ACT OF 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5749) to provide for a program of emergency unemployment compensation, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5749

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 2008”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Federal-State agreements.

Sec. 3. Emergency unemployment compensation account.

Sec. 4. Payments to States having agreements for the payment of emergency unemployment compensation.

Sec. 5. Financing provisions.

Sec. 6. Fraud and overpayments.

Sec. 7. Definitions.

Sec. 8. Applicability.

SEC. 2. FEDERAL-STATE AGREEMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Any State which desires to do so may enter into and participate in an agreement under this Act with the Secretary of Labor (in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”). Any State which is a party to an agreement under this Act may, upon providing 30 days’ written notice to the Secretary, terminate such agreement.

(b) PROVISIONS OF AGREEMENT.—Any agreement under subsection (a) shall provide that the State agency of the State will make payments of emergency unemployment compensation to individuals who—

(1) have exhausted all rights to regular compensation under the State law or under Federal law with respect to a benefit year (excluding any benefit year that ended before May 1, 2007);

(2) have no rights to regular compensation or extended compensation with respect to a week under such law or any other State unemployment compensation law or to compensation under any other Federal law (except as provided under subsection (e)); and

(3) are not receiving compensation with respect to such week under the unemployment compensation law of Canada.

(c) EXHAUSTION OF BENEFITS.—For purposes of subsection (b)(1), an individual shall be deemed to have exhausted such individual’s rights to regular compensation under a State law when—

(1) no payments of regular compensation can be made under such law because such individual has received all regular compensation available to such individual based on employment or wages during such individual’s base period; or

(2) such individual’s rights to such compensation have been terminated by reason of the expiration of the benefit year with respect to which such rights existed.

(d) WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT, ETC.—For purposes of any agreement under this Act—

(1) the amount of emergency unemployment compensation which shall be payable to any individual for any week of total unemployment shall be equal to the amount of the regular compensation (including dependents’ allowances) payable to such individual during such individual’s benefit year under the State law for a week of total unemployment;

(2) the terms and conditions of the State law which apply to claims for regular compensation and to the payment thereof shall apply to claims for emergency unemployment compensation and the payment thereof, except where otherwise inconsistent with the provisions of this Act or with the regulations or operating instructions of the Secretary promulgated to carry out this Act; and

(3) the maximum amount of emergency unemployment compensation payable to any individual for whom an emergency unemployment compensation account is established under section 3 shall not exceed the amount established in such account for such individual.

(e) ELECTION BY STATES.—Notwithstanding any other provision of Federal law (and if State law permits), the Governor of a State that is in an extended benefit period may provide for the payment of emergency unemployment compensation prior to extended compensation to individuals who otherwise meet the requirements of this section.

(f) UNAUTHORIZED ALIENS INELIGIBLE.—A State shall require as a condition of eligibility for emergency unemployment compensation under this Act that each alien who receives such compensation must be legally authorized to work in the United States, as defined for purposes of the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (26 U.S.C. 3301 et seq.). In determining whether an alien meets the requirements of this subsection, a State must follow the procedures provided in section 1137(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320b-7(d)).

SEC. 3. EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION ACCOUNT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Any agreement under this Act shall provide that the State will establish, for each eligible individual who files an application for emergency unemployment compensation, an emergency unemployment

compensation account with respect to such individual's benefit year.

(b) AMOUNT IN ACCOUNT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The amount established in an account under subsection (a) shall be equal to the lesser of—

(A) 50 percent of the total amount of regular compensation (including dependents' allowances) payable to the individual during the individual's benefit year under such law, or

(B) 13 times the individual's average weekly benefit amount for the benefit year.

(2) WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT.—For purposes of this subsection, an individual's weekly benefit amount for any week is the amount of regular compensation (including dependents' allowances) under the State law payable to such individual for such week for total unemployment.

(c) SPECIAL RULE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, if, at the time that the individual's account is exhausted or at any time thereafter, such individual's State is in an extended benefit period (as determined under paragraph (2)), then, such account shall be augmented by an amount equal to the amount originally established in such account (as determined under subsection (b)(1)).

(2) EXTENDED BENEFIT PERIOD.—For purposes of paragraph (1), a State shall be considered to be in an extended benefit period, as of any given time, if—

(A) such a period is then in effect for such State under the Federal-State Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 1970;

(B) such a period would then be in effect for such State under such Act if section 203(d) of such Act—

(i) were applied by substituting "4" for "5" each place it appears; and

(ii) did not include the requirement under paragraph (1)(A); or

(C) such a period would then be in effect for such State under such Act if—

(i) section 203(f) of such Act were applied to such State (regardless of whether the State by law had provided for such application); and

(ii) such section 203(f)—

(I) were applied by substituting "6.0" for "6.5" in paragraph (1)(A)(i); and

(II) did not include the requirement under paragraph (1)(A)(ii).

SEC. 4. PAYMENTS TO STATES HAVING AGREEMENTS FOR THE PAYMENT OF EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.

(a) GENERAL RULE.—There shall be paid to each State that has entered into an agreement under this Act an amount equal to 100 percent of the emergency unemployment compensation paid to individuals by the State pursuant to such agreement.

(b) TREATMENT OF REIMBURSABLE COMPENSATION.—No payment shall be made to any State under this section in respect of any compensation to the extent the State is entitled to reimbursement in respect of such compensation under the provisions of any Federal law other than this Act or chapter 85 of title 5, United States Code. A State shall not be entitled to any reimbursement under such chapter 85 in respect of any compensation to the extent the State is entitled to reimbursement under this Act in respect of such compensation.

(c) DETERMINATION OF AMOUNT.—Sums payable to any State by reason of such State having an agreement under this Act shall be payable, either in advance or by way of reimbursement (as may be determined by the Secretary), in such amounts as the Secretary estimates the State will be entitled to receive under this Act for each calendar month, reduced or increased, as the case may

be, by any amount by which the Secretary finds that the Secretary's estimates for any prior calendar month were greater or less than the amounts which should have been paid to the State. Such estimates may be made on the basis of such statistical, sampling, or other method as may be agreed upon by the Secretary and the State agency of the State involved.

SEC. 5. FINANCING PROVISIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Funds in the extended unemployment compensation account (as established by section 905(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1105(a))) of the Unemployment Trust Fund (as established by section 904(a) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1104(a))) shall be used for the making of payments to States having agreements entered into under this Act.

(b) CERTIFICATION.—The Secretary shall from time to time certify to the Secretary of the Treasury for payment to each State the sums payable to such State under this Act. The Secretary of the Treasury, prior to audit or settlement by the Government Accountability Office, shall make payments to the State in accordance with such certification, by transfers from the extended unemployment compensation account (as so established) to the account of such State in the Unemployment Trust Fund (as so established).

(c) ASSISTANCE TO STATES.—There are appropriated out of the employment security administration account (as established by section 901(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1101(a))) of the Unemployment Trust Fund, without fiscal year limitation, such funds as may be necessary for purposes of assisting States (as provided in title III of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 501 et seq.)) in meeting the costs of administration of agreements under this Act.

(d) APPROPRIATIONS FOR CERTAIN PAYMENTS.—There are appropriated from the general fund of the Treasury, without fiscal year limitation, to the extended unemployment compensation account (as so established) of the Unemployment Trust Fund (as so established) such sums as the Secretary estimates to be necessary to make the payments under this section in respect of—

(1) compensation payable under chapter 85 of title 5, United States Code; and

(2) compensation payable on the basis of services to which section 3309(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 applies. Amounts appropriated pursuant to the preceding sentence shall not be required to be repaid.

SEC. 6. FRAUD AND OVERPAYMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—If an individual knowingly has made, or caused to be made by another, a false statement or representation of a material fact, or knowingly has failed, or caused another to fail, to disclose a material fact, and as a result of such false statement or representation or of such nondisclosure such individual has received an amount of emergency unemployment compensation under this Act to which he was not entitled, such individual—

(1) shall be ineligible for further emergency unemployment compensation under this Act in accordance with the provisions of the applicable State unemployment compensation law relating to fraud in connection with a claim for unemployment compensation; and

(2) shall be subject to prosecution under section 1001 of title 18, United States Code.

(b) REPAYMENT.—In the case of individuals who have received amounts of emergency unemployment compensation under this Act to which they were not entitled, the State shall require such individuals to repay the amounts of such emergency unemployment

compensation to the State agency, except that the State agency may waive such repayment if it determines that—

(1) the payment of such emergency unemployment compensation was without fault on the part of any such individual; and

(2) such repayment would be contrary to equity and good conscience.

(c) RECOVERY BY STATE AGENCY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The State agency may recover the amount to be repaid, or any part thereof, by deductions from any emergency unemployment compensation payable to such individual under this Act or from any unemployment compensation payable to such individual under any State or Federal unemployment compensation law administered by the State agency or under any other Federal law administered by the State agency which provides for the payment of any assistance or allowance with respect to any week of unemployment, during the 3-year period after the date such individuals received the payment of the emergency unemployment compensation to which they were not entitled, except that no single deduction may exceed 50 percent of the weekly benefit amount from which such deduction is made.

(2) OPPORTUNITY FOR HEARING.—No repayment shall be required, and no deduction shall be made, until a determination has been made, notice thereof and an opportunity for a fair hearing has been given to the individual, and the determination has become final.

(d) REVIEW.—Any determination by a State agency under this section shall be subject to review in the same manner and to the same extent as determinations under the State unemployment compensation law, and only in that manner and to that extent.

SEC. 7. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act, the terms "compensation", "regular compensation", "extended compensation", "benefit year", "base period", "State", "State agency", "State law", and "week" have the respective meanings given such terms under section 205 of the Federal-State Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 1970 (26 U.S.C. 3304 note).

SEC. 8. APPLICABILITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b), an agreement entered into under this Act shall apply to weeks of unemployment—

(1) beginning after the date on which such agreement is entered into; and

(2) ending on or before March 31, 2009.

(b) TRANSITION FOR AMOUNT REMAINING IN ACCOUNT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), in the case of an individual who has amounts remaining in an account established under section 3 as of the last day of the last week (as determined in accordance with the applicable State law) ending on or before March 31, 2009, emergency unemployment compensation shall continue to be payable to such individual from such amounts for any week beginning after such last day for which the individual meets the eligibility requirements of this Act.

(2) LIMIT ON AUGMENTATION.—If the account of an individual is exhausted after the last day of such last week (as so determined), then section 3(c) shall not apply and such account shall not be augmented under such section, regardless of whether such individual's State is in an extended benefit period (as determined under paragraph (2) of such section).

(3) LIMIT ON COMPENSATION.—No compensation shall be payable by reason of paragraph (1) for any week beginning after June 30, 2009.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

New York (Mr. RANGEL) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York.

Mr. RANGEL. I would ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my very brief remarks, that my time be yielded to Mr. McDERMOTT who worked so desperately hard with Mr. ENGLISH to prepare this Congress to do what has to be done for a crisis that we hoped we would never have to experience.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. RANGEL. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I stand before you not as a Democrat speaking to Republicans, but as an American who recognizes that if I had to think of one of the most important assets that our country has had, after we talked about our flag, our military, our democracy, I think that we all would agree it's our middle class. They're different from most people. They're not recognized worldwide. They're not the rich. They're not the poor. They're people who struggle every day. But it's their dreams, I think, that make us different from any other country and any other democracy knowing that in this country there is no glass ceiling.

And no matter what we accomplish, that we could dream for our kids and for our grandkids, today, through no fault of their own, this dream is being shattered. It's being shattered by the deficits. It's being shattered by war. It's being shattered by losing our kids, losing our jobs, losing our hope, increased price of oil; and people are concerned about where do we go from here. I suggest to you that no one can challenge the fact that this country cannot go any further than our middle class.

So it's up to us to find out how do we handle this and how to explain, at a time when they're at most need, not just in terms of dollars and cents but in hopes that this country is going to pull out of this as we have in the past.

So what did Mr. McDERMOTT and Congressman ENGLISH do? They said no matter what happens in this country, whether we win or lose, you can depend on one thing: We will not give up on the American middle class. Now, you could talk about deficits and trust funds, you could talk about PAYGO, you could talk about anything; but you're not going to let this country drown because of technicalities.

The middle class is there when we need them. They're there to consume and to buy if they have to. They're there to fight and die in our wars. And now comes an opportunity where we come here together and we say it's not much, we've got to struggle to repair the economic damage, but in the meantime, those of you who have worked every day, those of you who we've not said "thank you" to, we're saying that we're going to be there because

through no fault of your own, our country has let you down.

I yield back for the technical things, but I do hope when we get back home that all of us can say, We didn't do everything that we wanted to, but at the time this bill came up for suspension, we were there for you.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks, first I want to say on behalf of all of my colleagues our thoughts and prayers are with our good friend and distinguished ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee, Congressman JIM McCRERY. Mr. McCRERY is not with us today, and he and his family mourn the untimely passing of JIM's sister. Our thoughts are with Congressman McCRERY and his entire family.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here in support of extending unemployment benefits, and I have sponsored legislation to accomplish that goal. All Republican members of the Ways and Means Committee supported extending benefits when our committee considered this legislation in April. But today I rise in opposition to the legislation that's before the House today which includes a radical departure from long-standing Federal policy when it comes to the balance between work and extended benefits. And I am especially opposed to the cynical election-year maneuvering reflected in how the House is considering this important issue today.

Federal law since 1981 has required at least 20 weeks of work before collecting Federal-extended benefits. The temporary program created in 2002 continued this commonsense policy. I believe requiring at least 20 weeks of work to qualify for Federal extended unemployment benefits is perfectly fair, but the majority of Democrats do not. So the legislation before us today makes a radical departure from 27 years of Federal policy by striking the commonsense 20-week work requirement.

Ironically, nearly every Democratic Member in the House supported this same requirement as part of the temporary program Congress created in 2002. Yet today, without a single hearing on this topic, this legislation would strike that sensible long-standing requirement.

So under this legislation, some individuals will receive 12 months of total unemployment benefits after having worked for as little as 2 weeks in some cases before being laid off. Does the majority think that this is fair to taxpayers to pay 12 months of unemployment benefits in exchange for less than 1 month of work?

Since the 1930s, unemployment benefits have been paid to those strongly attached to the workforce. That's the logic behind expecting at least 20 weeks of work before layoff for those who go on to collect Federal-extended benefits. It is not too much to expect someone who has worked for at least 20

weeks to collect up to 12 months of unemployment benefits.

What makes this worse, this legislation is being considered under rules that prevent any opportunities for amendments, that prevent any opportunities for substitutes or other avenues to correct what we believe is a serious error in this radical approach.

The way this bill is being considered is under a process usually reserved for naming post offices and honoring sports teams. In the past 2 years, this House has named 87 post offices using this process, and today by using this same process, House majority leaders trivialize the important issue of extending unemployment benefits to those who are hurting. And it didn't have to be this way.

Every Republican on the Ways and Means Committee supported extending unemployment benefits in some fashion 2 months ago. And I suspect almost every Member of this House shares that view today. The only disagreement involves whether there should be a minimum work requirement, among other important details.

But 2 months, again that's 2 months after this so-called emergency legislation was considered in the Ways and Means Committee, here we are 2 months later with the Majority's flawed take-it-or-leave-it approach.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize many workers are hurting. I continue to support extending help to those who need it most. Unfortunately, the bill before us insists on paying extended unemployment benefits even to those who have worked for only a fraction of the time they will collect benefits.

This radical policy is a departure from current law, a 27-year-old bipartisan policy, and that's simply not right. And the way this legislation is being considered is an affront to all Americans. This bill was brought directly to the floor without as much as a hearing in committee.

Mr. Speaker, I have a letter here from the Executive Office of the President stating the President's position. The administration strongly opposes this legislation, H.R. 5479, and they state that if it were presented to the President, the senior advisers would recommend that he veto the bill.

I place it into the RECORD at this time.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT
AND BUDGET,

Washington, DC, June 11, 2008.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY—H.R. 5749—EMERGENCY EXTENDED UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION ACT OF 2008—(REP. McDERMOTT (D) WASHINGTON AND 36 CO-SPONSORS)

The Administration is deeply committed to continually fostering an environment where every American who wants a job has a job. The Administration believes the best way to help workers is to create an environment that encourages job creation and to promote effective job training. To accomplish these goals, the Administration urges Congress to create more opportunities for

American exporters by passing the pending free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea, make permanent the President's tax cuts that will expire over the next two years, and reform and reauthorize the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and the Workforce Investment Act. The Administration looks forward to continuing to work with Congress to enact these important measures. However, the Administration strongly opposes H.R. 5749. If H.R. 5749 were presented to the President, his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.

This legislation raises several concerns. First, although the unemployment rate has recently risen, it remains below the levels historically relied on to justify a federally financed extension of unemployment benefits. The last initiation of temporary extended benefits was in 2002 amidst the unprecedented events surrounding September 11, 2001. Other than that special case, extensions have generally been granted only when the unemployment rate was notably higher than it is today, at or above 7 percent.

Second, this bill would allow the payment of up to 13 extra weeks of benefits in every State, even though some of those States have unemployment rates as low as 2.6 percent. At present, a majority of States have unemployment rates at or below 5 percent, and it is fiscally irresponsible to provide extra benefits in States with low unemployment rates. In States with higher unemployment rates, the Federal-State extended benefits program already can provide up to 13 additional weeks of benefits to workers who have exhausted their regular unemployment insurance benefits. As many economists have noted, the counterproductive result of a broad extension of benefits would be that recipients may remain unemployed for slightly longer than they would have otherwise.

Third, this bill does not contain an important provision found in previous Federal extensions and the permanent Federal-State extended benefits law that assures the benefit extension is paid only to individuals who have demonstrated a serious attachment to the labor force. Since 1981, individuals must have 20 weeks of full-time employment to qualify for extended unemployment benefits. Under this bill, individuals who have worked as little as two weeks could qualify for up to 52 weeks of total unemployment benefits. This violates the longstanding requirement that extended benefits should be for Americans with meaningful work histories.

Fourth, for purposes of determining whether a State is considered a "high unemployment" State in which an extra 13 weeks of benefits is payable (for a total of 26 weeks of additional benefits), this proposal would use a total unemployment rate of 6 percent as the trigger for State eligibility. This is, historically, a relatively low number for justifying a full year or more of unemployment benefits.

As an alternative to these ill-targeted and costly measures, the Administration could support legislation that would offer a 13-week extension of Federally financed unemployment benefits to high-unemployment States alone.

Mr. Speaker, again, I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill so that it can be brought back under a rule that allows the House to work its will and provides an opportunity to include a commonsense work requirement that does not pay a full year of benefits to someone who may have worked for as little as 2 weeks.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to thank Chairman RANGEL for his leadership on behalf of the American people.

Every Member in the House is elected by the people, and today we're going to find out if Members remember who they work for.

Before us is H.R. 5749, legislation I introduced because it's time the government work for the people and extend a helping hand to those who need a break. Contrary to what you have just heard, this bill was heard in the committee, was voted on in the committee, and three members of the Republican Party voted to move it out of the Ways and Means Committee. It was contained in the supplemental bill, and everybody in the House has had an opportunity to vote on it and discuss it. We are repassing it for the second time.

Now, this legislation should pass without a single vote against it. And that's why it was put on the supplemental on the suspension calendar. No Member who's read a newspaper or spent any time in a congressional district talking to constituents lately could possibly miss the fact that the economy is in serious trouble and so are millions of Americans, and it will just keep getting worse until we act.

Last Friday we saw the largest one-month jump in the unemployment rate in 22 years. Now does anyone doubt the gravity of that situation? Across America the unemployment rate is rising. It's over 7 percent in Michigan and above 6 percent in Alaska and a half a dozen other States.

Eighteen percent of the unemployed in this country have not been able to find a job for at least 6 months. They have exhausted all of their benefits. And that is what this bill deals with. Everywhere you look, people are worried about their home and their family and their future. And no one feels safe no matter where they are.

The economy has been claimed by the Iraq war. This wasteful, needless war has undermined our economy and put it on a deep, steep downward slide. Devastating energy and food prices have made the American people be up against the wall when businesses are shedding jobs to cope. It's been this way for months, and it's time for some relief.

□ 1530

The White House has been fighting, and as Mr. WELLER says, they've sent down from the administration a letter already saying they're going to veto it. Well, that's the administration. What do you expect out of that place?

This bill would provide 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits to all States where people have exhausted their regular unemployment. It gives another 13 weeks in States where the unemployment rate is above 6 percent.

The usual UI benefit is less than \$300 a week. That's poverty level assistance for a family struggling in an economy when gasoline is \$4 a gallon.

There is not a congressional district in this country that isn't feeling the ef-

fects of this downturn. Every Member in this Chamber has constituents who need help, and they are the workers we are working for, presumably.

This bill is a lifeboat to the American people to stay afloat during increasingly tough economic times. Anybody who votes against this bill is voting against reality. They are denying it.

Now, sometimes the American people watch this session out of interest, but today, they're watching because there's an urgent need to receive some help.

This issue of the 20 weeks is being held up as the reason why I'm going to vote against it. The Labor Department analyzed the fact that that unduly affects low-wage workers and women because they work part-time.

We hear that if you work 2 weeks you can get a year's benefits. Are you saying that the Governor of Illinois or the Governor of Michigan or the Governor of Pennsylvania is stupid and he's just throwing money out the window? These are qualified by the State-level people, and you know you can't give me one example of any place—people say Oregon, if you work 2 weeks in Oregon, you somehow are going to get a year's benefits for 2 weeks. There is no State in the Union where that is true. Give me one example.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I would note that most House Republicans and the administration have stated that we all support an extension of unemployment benefits. In fact, the letter we just placed in the RECORD says the administration would sign into law a 13-week extension that is targeted, providing the extended benefits that we all would like to see.

Mr. Speaker, as I prepare to yield to my good friend from Michigan, I would note that, again, the legislation before us is a radical change which eliminates the 20-week work requirement to qualify for a full 12 months of unemployment benefits, and that's why it's important we debate it, and that's why I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

With that, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentlelady from the State of Michigan.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

There certainly is no question that the American economy is struggling, and that is certainly true for my home State of Michigan. Michigan working families have been hit very, very hard by the restructuring, the economic transition that's happening in the domestic auto industry which has cost thousands of jobs and closing of factories.

A collapse in the housing market and skyrocketing gas prices have restricted mobility, making it much more difficult for people to find work.

And some would argue against this bill by saying that it's an impediment

to urging people to actually find work. I would say that argument is nonsense. People cannot find work if they can't even sell their house. People cannot travel long distances to find a job if they can't afford \$4 per gallon for gasoline. People cannot find a job if there are no jobs to be found.

This legislation will provide all unemployed workers 13 extra weeks of benefits as a bridge to better times, and it will give workers in hard-hit areas, like my home State of Michigan, an additional 13 weeks beyond that.

I believe that this is a very appropriate and compassionate action for this Congress to take, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this critical legislation.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material into the RECORD on H.R. 5749.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Mr. McDERMOTT. I would also like to enter into the RECORD a letter from the National Governors Association dated May 1, 2008, asking us to extend unemployment benefits to exhausted unemployment enrollees.

NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, May 1, 2008.

Hon. MAX BAUCUS,
Chairman, Committee on Finance, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. CHARLES B. RANGEL,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. CHARLES GRASSLEY,
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance, U.S.
Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. JIM MCCRERY,
Ranking Member, Committee on Ways and
Means, House of Representatives, Wash-
ington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BAUCUS, SENATOR GRASSLEY, CHAIRMAN RANGEL AND REPRESENTATIVE MCCRERY: On behalf of the nation's governors, we write to express our support for an extension of unemployment benefits and to request federal assistance for states to serve a growing number of jobless individuals.

In the last month, 36 states experienced an increase in the unemployment rate. The national unemployment rate increased to 5.1 percent in March 2008. Most notable, however, is the significant number of individuals that are unemployed for 27 weeks or longer, thus exhausting all unemployment benefits. Today, approximately 16.7 percent of jobless individuals are experiencing long-term unemployment compared to approximately 11 percent at the beginning of the last recession.

Beginning in 1935, a federal-state partnership was formed to create an unemployment program that would provide a core stabilizing function during economic downturns through short-term income support for jobless individuals. In prior recessions including the economic downturn that began in 2001, Congress and the Administration utilized the program to extend unemployment benefits to jobless individuals.

At the same time, any proposal to extend unemployment benefits must also address

the reality that states need additional resources to administer unemployment claims for a larger number of individuals for a longer period of time. This year alone, states may have to administer an average of nearly 400,000 unemployment insurance claims without federal funding. Federal support is needed by state employment and workforce agencies to administer increased initial unemployment claims, to support weekly unemployment benefits, and to provide employment and training services.

Given the current economic indicators and historical precedent, governors believe it is prudent and appropriate for Congress and the Administration to enact a temporary federally funded extension of unemployment insurance benefits and to provide a sufficient increase in funding for states to assist jobless individuals during this period of economic slowdown.

We stand ready to work with you and thank you for your leadership on this issue of national importance.

Sincerely,

Governor DONALD L.
CARCIERI,
Chair, Education,
Early Childhood and
Workforce Com-
mittee.

Governor BRAD HENRY,
Vice Chair, Education,
Early Childhood and
Workforce Com-
mittee.

I now yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. It's estimated that 4 million workers, 4 million, would be eligible under this unemployment extension, over 1 million who have already exhausted and 3 million in the future.

You know, in previous downturns when there were unemployment offices giving out checks, we could go there and we could talk to the people. That's no longer true in most States, but we should not let the absence of real faces blur our vision in Washington.

If you had the 4 million people line up, it would extend from Washington, D.C., to Denver, Colorado, and we should not differentiate as to what State they live in. If they've exhausted their benefits, they should be eligible.

Mr. WELLER says targeted, that's over 6 percent. It leaves out a majority of those who have exhausted their benefits. It's not targeted. It's ruthless. It's ruthless. It doesn't take into account the lives of people.

We saw the biggest increase in 20 years last night, from 5 to 5.5 percent. When President Bush signed the extension in 2002, it was 5.7. So you're going to stand up here now and quibble because of a difference of two-tenths of 1 percent, you don't want to extend benefits.

The 20-week thing is a Trojan horse. It's another excuse not to step up to the plate.

This is not a political issue. This is a people's issue. The exhaustion rate is the highest it's been at the beginning of the past five recessions. I urge on a bipartisan basis the passage of this bill.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I would note the previous speaker

referred to 6 percent as being ruthless. That's actually the formula in the majority Democrats' bill. So it was interesting that he criticized his own bill.

I would also note to my good friend from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) that Illinois is actually a State in which someone can work 2 weeks and actually, under the legislation that's before us, obtain 39 weeks of unemployment benefits.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to a distinguished member of the House Ways and Means Committee, Mr. BRADY.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, economically, our Nation is a Nation of thirds. One-third of our States face steep economic challenges, one-third are chugging along with their traditional economies, and one-third are enjoying strong job growth and, in fact, record low unemployment.

This measure is well-intended. There's no question about it. But compassion isn't enough. Jobs are what is needed.

Instead of targeting workers in the struggling States that need both help with their bills and, more importantly, a new job, this measure provides no job training, no hope to laid off workers, workers that I know don't want a handout. They want an opportunity for a job that they can raise their families on. They want an opportunity for new skills. They want opportunities.

And like many one-size-fits-all Washington programs, this bill unnecessarily drains the precious unemployment trust fund an extra \$8 billion by not targeting the help to the States and the workers who need it the most.

For hardworking Americans, though, what is most troubling is that this bill abandons the minimum work requirement that has, in the past, prevented the unscrupulous from gaming the system. By throwing out this reasonable requirement, that you actually have a real job before you get job benefits, people in some States can work as little as 2 weeks and receive government paychecks for 1 year.

Most Americans do the opposite. We work for a year, then we receive 2 weeks of vacation. In this bill, it's the opposite, 2 weeks of work and a year of Federal aid. And in fact, while it's been questioned that that isn't the case, according to the Congressional Budget Office, 4 States allow you to work as little as 1 week under some circumstances to receive benefits.

And what's unfortunate, who will pay the benefits that have been gamed? Hardworking American taxpayers who are struggling to make ends meet with record fuel prices because this Congress refuses to act to open up our resources and take more responsibility for America's own energy needs.

In conclusion, helping workers who need it the most, helping them find new jobs and stopping the gaming of our Federal aid is a bipartisan goal. Unfortunately, this bill fails on all counts.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS).

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. McDERMOTT for yielding and for bringing this necessary piece of legislation to us today.

It is basic, it is common sense, it is the right thing to do. People are calling out. They're crying out for help.

They ask, where is the Federal Government? Where is Congress? Which side is the government on? What are you doing to help the unemployed, people who lost their jobs? It's not their fault. What are you doing to help those in need, those who need a helping hand? What are you doing and doing now?

Mr. Speaker, some of us may not remember this, or maybe we never had to do it, but just a few short years ago, many people in this country washed their clothes at night and hung them up to a heater or to the fireplace so they could dry and wear them to work the next morning. I wonder if we're headed back to that reality. People need help and they need it now.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting as we debate this legislation that some have criticized targeted help for those who we would like to provide extended unemployment benefits for, and of course, the bill before us actually targets the final 13 weeks of a year's worth of unemployment benefits with a 6 percent trigger, and it's also interesting that a senior member of the Ways and Means Committee from Michigan, Mr. LEVIN, labels that 6 percent trigger for that targeted approach "ruthless," a description that he uses to describe his own legislation. I would not use that word.

Before further debating the legislation which eliminates the 20-week work requirement for extended unemployment benefits, Mr. Speaker, can you tell us how much time we have remaining on both sides?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Illinois has 8 minutes. The gentleman from Washington has 9 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California and a senior Republican in the House Ways and Means Committee, Mr. HERGER.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, like everyone else in this Chamber, I'm concerned about rising unemployment, but this legitimate concern does not justify Congress making poor policy.

I'm concerned that H.R. 5749 significantly departs from the long-standing Federal policy that workers should have meaningful employment before collecting extended unemployment benefits. By excluding the minimum 20 weeks of work requirement, this legislation would allow someone with as little as 2 weeks of work to qualify for up to 52 weeks of unemployment benefits. This moves away from the core purpose of unemployment benefits and towards a welfare-like system.

In addition, such expansive benefits may force States to raise payroll taxes, resulting in slower job creation and further squeezing workers' wages. This won't help current workers or unemployed workers in search of new jobs.

I believe expecting at least 20 weeks of work in exchange for 52 weeks of unemployment benefit is fair to U.S. workers and would limit any negative impact on job growth and workers' income.

Unfortunately, today's legislation doesn't include this common-sense requirement, even though Democratic Members were nearly unanimous in supporting this requirement in the legislation creating the 2002-2004 temporary extended benefits program.

□ 1545

As a result, while I'm concerned for workers in my district and across the Nation during this period of economic uncertainty, I must oppose this legislation and urge my colleagues to vote "no" so we can bring this bill back to the floor in a form that all Members can support.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL).

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5749. The CBO, or the Congressional Budget Office, recently found that extending unemployment benefits is one of the most cost-effective, fastest acting forms of economic stimulus. As a matter of fact, it's estimated that every dollar spent on unemployment insurance boasts the economy by \$1.64.

My friends, this is a systemic problem. This is not a footnote; this is not an ad lib; this is not something as an addendum. We need to face this problem head on. Forty percent of unemployed workers in 11 States have already exhausted their unemployment insurance. In New Jersey, it's projected that nearly 153,000 workers will deplete their regular unemployment benefits between now and the next several months. There are the unemployed. There are those that are underemployed, who have sought work, have found no work, they find themselves relegated to no States whatsoever. How dare anyone question this legislation while people are unemployed!

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as we continue to debate this radical change, which eliminates the 20-week work requirement to be eligible for 12 months of unemployment benefits, I'm happy to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished Republican whip of the House, Mr. BLUNT of Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for yielding.

I, too, share the concerns that, for all the time that the House has dealt with this whole issue of extended unemployment benefits going back to 1981, we have never before left this up to the States to decide how this Federal money would be spent. By, in the past, saying that you had to meet the 20-

week requirement, at least every State had the same situation that they dealt with.

I would also like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that this bill is being considered under a procedure known as suspension of the rules. Of course you know that, Mr. Speaker, but everyone who listens to this debate may not. Usually that procedure is used for non-controversial matters. By putting it under a suspension of the rules, the so-called PAYGO requirement that the majority has talked about and trumpeted as fiscal discipline doesn't. That's a requirement where you pay for these benefits with a bill you bring to the floor. The roughly \$10 billion cost of this bill is just being added to the deficit.

As we're well aware, a group of Democrats known as the "Blue Dogs" has been particularly strong in advocating this PAYGO arrangement, yet apparently they're not going to oppose this bill. And the reason appears to me to be quite revealing. This morning's CQ Today quotes one of the Blue Dog leaders as saying that PAYGO should not apply because it's only a temporary bill. The Member said it's not a bill that's forever, like the GI benefits bill, it's a short-term thing. So that means, I guess, that temporary spending increases don't have to be offset. Yet these same Blue Dogs have forced the House to pass billions of dollars in tax increases to extend current temporary tax provisions, like the research provisions, the development provisions, or the alternative minimum tax patch that we've been able to use to prevent more people from falling into that tax trap for some years, or the continuation of being able to deduct local and State sales taxes.

As I've said many times, the PAYGO provision is a tool that's used to promote tax increases. But every time the majority wants to figure out how to get around it, they seem to be able to figure out how to get around it, and they have with this bill today.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL).

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, what I find most intriguing about this discussion is that those who are unemployed, to get this benefit, paid for this insurance policy. This is their money. When times were good, they put money away to unemployment insurance. And when times are bad, they get their insurance premiums back, known as unemployment benefits. It is as simple as that. This is their money, those who are unemployed.

Second, as my colleagues on the other side have forced through and agreed to spend \$48 billion of U.S. taxpayer money to rebuild Iraq—their roads, their bridges, their schools, their hospitals—but when it comes to Americans, to give them their unemployment insurance, there isn't any money in the system; you're breaking the bank; you can't afford it.

To those who want to advocate spending 13 years, 10 years, a decade, as long as it takes in Iraq, I find it ironic they find 13 weeks of additional unemployment insurance to help a family get through a bump economically as too much and too long.

Mr. Speaker, 8 years is too long for George Bush's economic policies. It's right to give these people the economic security they've earned and put away.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as we continue to debate this legislation which eliminates the 20-week work requirement to qualify for up to 12 months of unemployment benefits, I would ask, Mr. Speaker, how much time remains on each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Illinois has 3½ minutes. The gentleman from Washington has 7 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I will reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES).

(Mrs. JONES of Ohio asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, here we are, June 2008. How many people do you know are unemployed? How many people do you know who have been walking, looking for a job, need an opportunity, can't figure out how they're going to pay for gas that costs \$4 a gallon, milk that costs \$3.50, a loaf of bread that costs \$3? How many people do you know like that?

Why not extend unemployment? Why not give these folks an opportunity? They were hardworking people. They were part of the working class of America, and now are locked out and left out of the process.

In my own congressional district, there is a community where the unemployment rate is 11 percent. They want to go back to work. What a boom to the economy. Give some unemployment benefits to some folks, let them go spend some money and take care of their families. If only the Congress would do that today, what a significant opportunity we would have to bring some people out of a morass back into an opportunity to do well.

Pass this legislation, ladies and gentlemen. It's the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank Chairman RANGEL and Ranking Member McCRERY for their diligent work to bring this legislation to the Floor. Additionally I would like to thank the Chair of the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, JIM McDERMOTT and Ranking Member WELLER for their leadership on this issue.

In our teetering economy it is often the unemployed who suffer the most, and it is time that Congress take a stand for our Nation's unemployed. The unemployment rate surged to 5.5 percent from 5.0 percent—the biggest one-month jump in more than two decades (since February 1986) and climbing to the highest level in nearly four years (October 2004).

These are American workers in the most vulnerable position—often not able to put food on the table for their families on a consistent basis. And I will state as I did before we completed the first stimulus package, that we must not forget those who are not able to find work.

My State of Ohio does not meet the test under the current formula for an extension of unemployment benefits. But there are various parts of Ohio, including my hometown of Cleveland which may by definition have over 6 percent unemployment. In Ohio, the unemployment rate has gone from 4.5 percent to 5.3 percent during the Bush Administration. In Cuyahoga County, unemployment is currently at 6.4 percent. Sadly, there are cities within my districts whose numbers are even higher than that. Mere technicalities mean nothing when you cannot pay rent.

This condition is prevalent in many areas around the country. Many of these workers have been displaced by the sweeping tide of globalization and are having a hard time finding new employment, or training to transition to a different type of job in our new economy. Mr. Speaker we must not forget these Americans.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished Republican leader of the House, Mr. BOEHNER of Ohio.

Mr. BOEHNER. Let me thank my colleague from Illinois for yielding time and make clear that I want to vote for a bill that extends unemployment benefits to those who have been laid off in areas where we have high unemployment. But the bill before us is not targeted at States where we've seen the spike in unemployment. I mean, we've got an unemployment rate in Oklahoma, as an example, of about 2.6 percent, or maybe you could go to, I think it's South Dakota, where the unemployment rate is about 2.4 percent. Yet, under this bill, it's a Federal mandate one-size-fits-all for all 50 States. I just think that if we're going to be serious about spending taxpayer money, we ought to target that money to those areas where we have high unemployment and where people need our help.

The bill also eliminates the requirement that individuals put in at least 20 weeks of work to collect extended unemployment benefits. And when this was put into the law, and when we extended this law in 2002, almost all the Democrat members voted to do this. And what it means is that some people could work as little as 2 weeks and receive up to 52 weeks of unemployment benefits. I don't think that's neither reasonable, nor is it a good use of limited taxpayer resources.

I'm open to extending unemployment benefits, but I think this bill that we have before us falls far short of what we need to do. It's neither fair to unemployed workers who truly need our help, nor to taxpayers who are going to fund it.

I think we can do better. And before we send a final version of this bill to the President, I hope that we do better. And I hope we will work in a bipartisan way to come to an agreement to extend

unemployment benefits in a reasonable, responsible way. But in the meantime, this bill is not the answer, and I would urge my colleagues to vote "no."

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, to correct something that has just been said on the floor, I understand that someone may not have read the bill. There is no mandate in this bill that any State has to do anything. They can enter into an agreement with the Federal Government and take this money. They are not forced to do anything. And I'm sure every smart Governor will figure out what to do.

I yield 1 minute to Ms. BERKLEY from Nevada.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, Congress has taken several steps to shore up the Nation's economy, including passage of the economic stimulus bill that provided millions of Americans with rebate checks and measures to help homeowners struggling to stay in their homes. This legislation is an important next step.

The once recession-proof economy of my district of Las Vegas has not been spared the effects of this downturn. In fact, Nevada has been hit harder than any other State by the foreclosure crisis, and currently our unemployment rate is above the national average.

With gas prices and the cost of food skyrocketing, fewer visitors are coming to Las Vegas. That means that more workers are going to be laid off. It is, therefore, absolutely critical that Congress step up and pass an extension of unemployment benefits.

I support the bill we are considering today because it will help thousands of hardworking Nevadans get by until the situation improves and they can return to work.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains on each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 2½ minutes. The gentleman from Washington has 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I thank the gentleman for yielding and appreciate the committee bringing this bill to the floor.

It is just so fundamental that one of the times when government should step in and lend a family a hand is when that family, through no fault of their own, has lost their job. The difference is whether or not that family will be able to maintain and hold on to their home, to their car, to their kids' education, to provide the wherewithal for their children. And for millions of Americans, that's what's happened. And since they've lost that job, they have also exhausted their unemployment benefits that has enabled them to keep their head barely above water. They're gone looking for jobs, they've gone looking for work. They've tried to retrain. They still haven't been able to

secure the employment because this is a terrible market for employment.

What we need to do is to extend those unemployment benefits to those families so that they can hold themselves together. It should not be a policy in this country that when you lose your job through no fault of your own, that you crash to the ground, you lose your home, you lose your kids' education, and you start all over again. It's not good for the economy, it's horrible for these families, and it's wrong for this government not to take every step we can to prevent that.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Well, Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to state that I believe the vast majority of Members of this House overwhelmingly support extension of unemployment benefits for those who need help. We're debating the legislation before us that makes a radical change in qualifying for unemployment benefits. In fact, you can work as little as 2 weeks and obtain up to 52 weeks of unemployment benefits in the State of Illinois under their current policy if this legislation were to become law.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, it's hard for me to understand why the gentleman from Illinois keeps bringing up his own State as an example of wasting money and he has never brought any legislation to fix what their stupid legislature has done. He is acting as though the people in his own State don't know what they're doing.

Now, if somebody works, money is paid into the fund. If they work for a week in one quarter and a week in another quarter, it is possible that they might get \$20 or some minimal benefit. To imply that working 2 weeks you get \$400 a week, as you do in the State of Washington, for 26 weeks or 52 weeks is simply misleading, and he knows it.

□ 1600

I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL).

Mr. RANGEL. Thank you again, Dr. McDERMOTT, Mr. ENGLISH, and all of those that I know everybody in this House is sensitive to the plight that these unfortunate, hardworking people find themselves. All I can suggest, from a very political point of view, is that at some point when we get home, somebody is going to ask us how did we vote? And as they put together their budgets and try to figure out the rent, the mortgages, the tuition, the gas prices, I just hope that you perfect the arguments of those of you that oppose this bill in such a way that you expect they would understand what the heck you are talking about.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I note with some humor my good friend from Washington State's comments about whether or not I proposed legislation to right the wrong that I have been raising. Actually, existing law for extending benefits requires 20 weeks' worth. So there is no need for

legislation to maintain existing law. What is important to point out is that this legislation eliminates that 20-week work requirement in order to qualify for 52 weeks of unemployment benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, what is the remaining time?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Washington has 2½ minutes. The gentleman from Illinois has 1½ minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

Mr. LEVIN. I want to read, Mr. WELLER, the metropolitan areas with unemployment above 6 percent that would be left out under your so-called targeting, Danville, Illinois, these are among many, and Kankakee and Rockford. I just picked those three out. And it is unconscionable for you to say—

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Will the gentleman from Michigan yield?

Mr. LEVIN. I will yield on your time.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Do you agree that the 6 percent that you are talking about is the 6 percent trigger that—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from Michigan has expired.

Mr. LEVIN. No, no. The 6 percent is the trigger for the additional 13 weeks, not for the basic 15 weeks. You misstate—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will suspend.

The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. To Mr. HOYER from Maryland I yield the remaining time. We have the right to close, however, I think.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Illinois has 1½ minutes. The gentleman from Washington has 2 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, just so we fully understand, it is my understanding that the distinguished majority leader is going to close for the majority and that I have 1 minute remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 1½ minutes remaining.

Mr. WELLER from Illinois. So I should do my close on our side and then Mr. HOYER will close for the majority.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, sometimes in debate positions are mischaracterized. But I think it is important to point out—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will suspend.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize Mr. HOYER first, and then let you come, and then I will close.

We got our wires crossed.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland for 1 minute.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend from Washington State for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, for the last 7½ years, the President and members of his administration have claimed that the American economy is doing just fine. And in December, President Bush said, "The economy is pretty good. There are definitely some storm clouds and concerns, but the underpinning is good."

But the reality, of course, that we have seen is far different, particularly for American workers.

Just last Friday, the Labor Department reported that the unemployment rate jumped one-half of 1 percent, from 5 percent to 5.5 percent. Now to some of us, perhaps that is simply a statistic. For some families, it is a crisis. This is the largest 1-month increase in unemployment in 22 years, or said a different way, until the 6th year of the Reagan administration.

Our economy has actually lost jobs each of the last 5 months, a loss of some 325,000 jobs since the first of the year. In fact, this administration has created about 3.6 million jobs over the last 7½ years, as opposed to 20 million plus jobs under the Clinton administration, or under Clinton, an average of 236,000 new jobs per month, and under this administration approximately 40,000 new jobs per month. And you need 100,000 to stay even. That is why this bill is on the floor today.

Over the last 12 months, the number of unemployed Americans has increased by 1.6 million, from nearly 6.9 million in May of 2007 to nearly 8.5 million in May of this year. That is 8.5 million of our fellow citizens who don't have a job, who are not sure how they are going to pay for their housing, their rent, their food, their medicine and the clothing for their children. That is what we are talking about today. We are talking about those 8.5 million people who are our constituents, Americans who need our help. And that is what this vote is today at this point in time.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, 1.5 million of those workers are what we call euphemistically "long-term unemployed," which means they have been jobless for more than 6 months. I don't know how many of you have had the opportunity to see "Pursuit of Happiness," spelled h-a-p-p-y. It is a wonderful movie about a now very successful African American and his little boy who found themselves homeless with no money. And they went to the homeless shelter, and they couldn't get in. Those are the people we are talking about. That is what we are voting on this day, as to whether or not we are going to reach out to those people and try to lift them up and give them a helping hand, not a handout, but a helping hand. These are people who were employed, who were working, and through no fault of their own, they lost

their jobs. Because if it is the fault of their own, by the way, they don't get unemployment.

All the while, working Americans have been confronted with decreasing household incomes, exploding gas and food prices and escalating health care costs. Why then, given this squeeze on hardworking middle-class American families, does the President threaten to veto a common-sense, compassionate response, the temporary extension of unemployment benefits?

Here is the kicker. Listen to me. There are 200,000 more long-term jobless Americans today, right now, as we debate this bill, 200,000 more Americans who are on long-term jobless status than when President Bush last signed an extension of unemployment benefits into law. In other words, the status today in America is that there are 200,000 more people who need our help than when President Bush last signed an extension of long-term unemployment.

How can we then say it is not time to act today, to reach out our hand today, to say that the Congress of the United States feels your pain, hears your cry, and responds? There is no justification for the President's threatened veto on this much-needed legislation, Mr. Speaker. This bill is not only a sign of compassion and a demonstration of our values, but it is also a fast-acting form of economic stimulus.

Who says so? Conservative economists say so. It will help lift up our floundering economy. It will simply provide up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits in every State to workers exhausting regular unemployment compensation. And in States with higher levels of unemployment, an additional 13 weeks is available on top.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is vital. It is vital for workers and their families who are struggling to make ends meet in this poorly performing economy. It is not charity. It is our obligation and responsibility. It is a recognition that under the administration, the American worker has been forced to contend with job loss, decreasing incomes, exploding gas costs, food and health care costs, and unprecedented foreclosure rates.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is the right thing to do at the right time, at the right place. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, this is not a Republican or Democratic issue, this is not a liberal or conservative issue. This is an issue of saying, there are people in trouble. We hear their cry. We respond to help.

Ladies and gentlemen of the House of Representatives, we call this the people's House. Help the people this day.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to echo the majority leader's comments when I agree that this issue, the issue of extending unemployment benefits, should not be a Republican or Democrat issue. And we, of course, on our side of the aisle, want to extend

unemployment benefits for those who need help. And we are prepared to work, as we have been, to achieve that goal.

I would note that 8 weeks ago when the Ways and Means Committee took up this legislation, it was deemed emergency legislation. It had to move through the committee quickly. It was an emergency. We had to do it right away. Well 2 months later it finally comes to the floor. And I believe that if we want to be compassionate, if we want to help those who need help, we need to do it in the right way. And that is if it is an emergency, we should have done it 8 weeks ago, number one, but we should also do it in the proper legislative way of ensuring that it is a bipartisan bill and that we construct it in a way that recognizes what has worked in the past. And I would note, as the majority leader said, back in 2002, we passed a bipartisan unemployment extension legislation that was signed into law by the President, and it maintained a 27-year precedent which was that one should have to work for 20 weeks in order to qualify for 52 weeks' worth of unemployment benefits.

And that is the big concern here with this legislation today. There is a radical departure from an established policy of 27 years of requiring 20 weeks of work to qualify for a full year of unemployment benefits. And the legislation before us today repeals that. It eliminates a 27-year precedent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "no." Let's bring this legislation back tomorrow, under a rule, and allow an amendment to be offered to strike this radical change.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I urge a "no" vote.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Illinois says that he would go for this bill but for this one provision. If that one provision were there, he would go for it. But the fact is that you have 100 metropolitan areas in this country where people simply have run out of benefits. And it is over 6 percent in those metropolitan areas. The Governors have asked us for this, and the technical thing that my opponent uses is, you know, somewhere out there, there is somebody who paid \$40 into the fund, and because of the way it is written, he gets \$20 out, and so I can't vote for it.

Well there are 1.6 million who already exhausted their benefits, and there are many more. And the national Governors sent this letter to us. They are not the only ones. State legislator, labor unions, everyone is asking for this. You can vote "no" if you want. You will have to face your constituency in November.

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act and congratulate Speaker PELOSI and Chairman RANGEL for their quick response to the surge in the nation's unemployment rate.

H.R. 5749 will provide immediate relief to families across the country by extending un-

employment benefits for an additional 13 weeks in all states. It also allows for a further extension in benefits in states hardest hit by the weakening economy. Passing this legislation will provide much needed help to 3.8 million Americans—including 70,000 Minnesota families.

The latest Labor Department report showed a 5 percent increase in unemployment from April 2008 to May 2008—the biggest one-month increase in unemployment in 22 years. The economic crisis has resulted in five months of job losses and projections unfortunately indicate that the situation is likely to worsen.

An extension of unemployment benefits is critical for families struggling to deal with increased gas and food prices while searching for a new job. It is also one of the most cost-effective ways to stimulate the economy. In fact, every \$1 spent on these benefits results in \$1.64 in new economic demand.

We need to pass this legislation and provide relief for America's working families today. This Congress has also enacted an economic stimulus plan in the form of tax rebate checks and passed several measures to begin to address gas prices. In addition, the House of Representatives has passed legislation to help homeowners avoid foreclosure and a federal budget that would reinvest in Americans. In the long-term, we need a comprehensive approach to restore the strength of our economy. We need to get serious about addressing health care costs and invest in education and training to prepare for competition in the global economy.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 5749 provides critical, immediate relief for working families and our struggling economy. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5749, the Emergency Extended Unemployment Act of 2008. This bill would establish a temporary program providing extended unemployment benefits in every State to individuals exhausting their regular unemployment compensation. The duration of these extended benefits would equal the lesser of 13 weeks or half the duration of regular unemployment compensation.

This bill could not be any timelier. It is no longer debatable as to whether the retraction of the economy is hurting every-day Americans across our nation. Over the first three months of 2008, the U.S. economy lost a total of 232,000 jobs. With the labor market in such a steep decline, more workers face the possibility of layoffs and current unemployment compensation recipients face greater difficulty in becoming reemployed. The total number of unemployed workers has already grown by 1.1 million over the last twelve months.

The economic forecast is even worse in my home state of Michigan. While economists worry about the overall health of our economy, as the national unemployment average creeps above 5.5 percent, prospective employees in Michigan face a 7.6-percent unemployment rate—one of the highest state rates in the nation.

Luckily, this bill recognizes that the retraction of the economy has hurt some communities more than others. Under this bill, states with high unemployment, like Michigan, would be able to provide an additional 13 weeks of extended benefits. This would give the unemployed a total of 26 weeks of coverage as they transition into new positions.

Madam Speaker, we need to help our workers, especially those in who have been hit the hardest by this economic downturn. At the same time, we need to stimulate our economy in the most effective manner possible to prevent the downturn from spiraling into a recession. This bill accomplishes this goal. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office released a study this past January specifically endorsing the use of extended unemployment benefits as a cost-effective way to boost the economy.

We in the Congress need to be both smart and compassionate. Let's help the unemployed while protecting those who currently have employment. Let's stimulate the economy and create new sustainable job opportunities for the American worker. Let's pass H.R. 5749.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation to temporarily extend unemployment insurance benefits.

Whether we are in a recession or not, the point is clear: current economic growth has been so sluggish that the job market is weak and job prospects are poor. The recent May 2008 jobs report confirms this as the unemployment rate increased by one-half point to 5.5 percent, which was the biggest one-month increase in over 20 years. Since the first of the year, our economy has lost more than 300,000 jobs.

By providing an extra 13 weeks of jobless benefits to workers in every State who exhaust their unemployment benefits and another 13 weeks of benefits to those in States with high unemployment rates, we can help approximately 4 million unemployed workers meet basic needs such as food and rent while they continue to look for work at a time when the economy is languishing. And we can give our economy a much-needed boost. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, extending unemployment benefits would be one of the most cost-effective and fastest-acting forms of economic stimulus.

Madam Speaker, many Americans are struggling to make ends meet. With rising gas and food prices and a weakened labor market, we can help those hardest hit by this sluggish economy by providing them relief in passing this much-needed bill.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5749, the Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 2008, which will provide 13 weeks of extended unemployment compensation benefits for all workers who have exhausted their current 26 weeks of benefits. This measure also provides 13 additional weeks for workers in States with unemployment rates of 6 percent or higher. In order to receive these benefits, workers must have lost a job through no fault of their own, be actively searching for a job, be able to work, and must have a minimum number of weeks worked and amount of wages earned over a specific timeframe prior to being unemployed.

This bill provides a critical boost to the many Rhode Islanders, and Americans across the Nation, who are struggling to find employment. Our country's unemployment rate jumped from 5 percent in April to 5.5 percent in May, the biggest one-month increase in over 20 years. In my home State of Rhode Island, the unemployment rate reached 6.1 percent in April, and we have lost an estimated

6,300 jobs since the beginning of the year. H.R. 5749 would provide relief through March 2006 and benefit 3.8 million Americans. Most importantly, this measure would immediately help as many as 8,000 Rhode Islanders.

When discussing this matter, we must remember to look beyond the statistics and recognize the serious toll that unemployment is taking on American families. I have received numerous calls from my fellow Rhode Islanders asking when Congress would extend their benefits. They tell me how they are looking for a job, but they just have not been able to find one yet. They have not given up—research has shown that workers who exhaust their unemployment benefits, search for a job at similar or higher levels of intensity as those who find employment before their benefits expire—but they need more time. Compounding the problem, the rising cost of gas poses an additional challenge in searching for a job, and rising food prices have made it even harder to put food on the table. Our constituents are turning to us for help.

As Members of Congress, we have the power to give hard-working Americans another chance to continue their job search and provide for their families. Our country has faced economic hardships and recessions before, and I have no doubt we will weather this current downturn. I encourage my colleagues to pass this bill and give a hand up to those who are most vulnerable during these trying times.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5749 to extend unemployment benefits to millions of American workers, including over 700,000 in my home State of California.

I wanted to take this opportunity to put a human face on the recent economic downturn.

Just yesterday, I spoke with a 51-year-old woman named Karen from my home district of San Diego.

After working for the past 10 years as a customer service specialist, Karen was recently laid off from her job.

She has been actively looking for work but has been unable to find a job because of the poor economy.

Unable to afford health insurance, the stress of being unemployed is beginning to take a toll on Karen's health.

It has also become harder and harder for her to pay her bills. She told me, "Just looking for a job costs money, because you've got to pay for the gas to drive to the interviews."

And to make matters worse, her unemployment benefits have just ended.

By voting for H.R. 5749, we will provide the support millions of Americans need to get back on their feet.

Let us help American workers get their lives back.

Mr. SIRE. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 5749, the Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act that will provide immediate relief to 3.8 million unemployed workers who continue to struggle to find work in the slowing economy.

Recently, the Nation experienced the biggest one-month jump in the unemployment rate in more than two decades, rising from 5.0 percent to 5.5 percent and is now an entire percentage point higher than a year ago. Americans have been losing jobs in each of the past 5 months, with the number of unemployed now at 3.8 million. The airline and automobile industries alone have laid off over 50,000 employees combined.

The current high levels of unemployment have only added to the struggles of the U.S. economy by adding thousands more Americans to those having a hard time making ends meet. This bill will provide the necessary extension of unemployment benefits to those 3.8 million Americans who struggle to find employment within the current timeframe.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this necessary legislation that will give our economy the relief it needs. Extending these benefits is an efficient and quick way to support our country's workers and invigorate the economy. My Democratic colleagues and I are committed to providing the much needed relief to the millions of unemployed workers, who in the face of rising gas and food costs, continue to struggle to support themselves and their families.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time has expired.

The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5749, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1615

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING REBATE CHECKS

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 977) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that rebate checks would better stimulate the economy if spent on American-made products and services from American-owned companies.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 977

Whereas many economists believe the economy of the United States is entering a recession;

Whereas the economy lost 17,000 jobs in January 2008 and 191,000 in 2007;

Whereas the manufacturing sector lost 269,000 jobs over the past 12 months and 28,000 jobs in January 2008 alone;

Whereas manufacturing employment now accounts for less than 10 percent of the job market for the first time since data began being collected in the 1930s;

Whereas in January 2008, 18.3 percent of those unemployed had been out of work for 27 weeks or longer, up from 16.2 percent a year earlier;

Whereas manufactured goods imported from developing countries have grown from just 2.5 percent of the gross domestic product in 1990 to 6 percent in 2006;

Whereas annually, total housing starts decreased in 2007 to 1,353,700, which is a 24.8