



Building & Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO



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2 Million Americans Lose Unemployment Benefits as Holidays Arrive

Senate GOP Blocks Extension as Democrats Push for Passage

Yesterday, Senate Republicans blocked a one-year extension of emergency unemployment insurance benefits program, while President Obama and Democratic senators urged passage of an extension on the day the program expired.

Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) filed a unanimous consent request to begin debate on the bill and **Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.), acting on behalf of all Republicans, objected.**

Senator Brown claimed that the GOP simply wanted to make sure that the UI extension was "paid for," even though they simultaneously are urging the continuance of tax breaks for the wealthy that will add hundreds of billions of dollars to our national debt and not do one single thing to put Americans back to work.

Meanwhile, federal unemployment benefits expire today for millions of long-term unemployed workers.

Obama said he discussed the extension with congressional leaders during a meeting Nov. 30, but no deal was announced.

"I've asked that Congress act to extend this emergency relief without delay to folks who are facing tough times by no fault of their own," Obama said.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs offered more details:

"The president brought up the fact that we're seeing the beginning of the expiration of unemployment benefits, and that even as we have these discussions about extending tax cuts for those that make \$250,000, those that make a million, those that make \$10 million a year, we certainly in no way can afford to look past the fact that there are those that have been hurt extensively in losing a job and need to continue to have those benefits," Gibbs said.

Reed argued on the Senate floor that the UI benefits have never been offset and historically have been considered as emergency spending.

Reed said he did not understand the Senate Republicans opposing the legislation on arguments over spending while at "the same time insist we give tax breaks to people making more than \$250,000."

In what can only be classified as an incredibly hypocritical statement, Brown said the government needs to display "fiscal responsibility" and that the Senate has done nothing to

help small businesses "which could hire these unemployed people."

"We put too many barriers to small businesses that create jobs," Brown said; neglecting the fact that the GOP blocked a measure a few months ago that was proposed by Senate Democrats and would have provided aid small businesses, including tax breaks, new incentives, and an attempt to expand credit through a lending program that utilizes local banks.

Senator Bob Casey (D-Pa.) said without an extension, 2 million jobless workers will exhaust their benefits by the end of the year. He said each month after that, over 1 million more workers would fall off the rolls. By April 2011, 6 million workers would be without benefits.

"I urge my Senate colleagues to allow for this extension to pass, preventing families and the economy from suffering," Casey said.