

WASHINGTON, DC - **Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD)** joined the U.S. House of Representatives today in taking further action to help reinvigorate the flagging U.S. economy by approving a measure to extend the length of time qualified workers who have lost their jobs can collect unemployment benefits. Economists and policy experts agree that extending these benefits is one of the most cost-effective and fast

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acting ways to stimulate the economy because the money is spent quickly.

"The poor economy is affecting everyone, but it is taking a particularly painful toll on unemployed Americans and their families," **stated Rep. Hoyer**. "This legislation is vital for workers in Maryland and throughout the country who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own and are struggling to make ends meet while they look for work in this poorly performing economy."

The need for an effective unemployment benefit has become more urgent in recent months as more workers have lost their jobs on account of the economic downturn. The most recent Department of Labor monthly jobs report shows that the nation's unemployment rate for May rose from 5 percent to 5.5 percent - the biggest monthly increase in 22 years. In addition, the report found that 49,000 workers lost their jobs in May, for a total of nearly 325,000 jobs lost since the beginning of the year. Unemployment in Maryland has risen 0.7 percent from 4.5 percent in May 2007 to 5.2 percent in May 2008 [Department of Labor].

The Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act approved in the House would immediately 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 of that. The extended relief would run through March 2009 and would benefit 3.8 million Americans, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Federal unemployment trust funds, which have more than enough reserves to cover the cost, will finance these benefits.

Democrats in Congress have pushed to extend unemployment benefits since the beginning of the year, as the economy weakened, but have faced continued resistance from the Bush Administration, which has threatened to veto the measure.

"There is no justification for the President's threatened veto of this much-needed legislation," **stated Hoyer.** "Under this Administration, the American worker has been forced to contend with job loss, decreasing incomes, exploding gas, food and health care costs, and unprecedented foreclosure rates. This bill is not only a sign of compassion and a demonstration of our values, but also a fast-acting form of economic stimulus for the floundering Bush economy."

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