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Congress of the United States

U.S. House of Representatives

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April 29, 2014

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner,

The stories of job-seeking Americans whose unemployment insurance was cut off December 28 are gut-wrenching. And more and more Americans are describing their ordeal every day that the House fails to renew these benefits.

During the course of just a few hours last week, more than five dozen Americans submitted their stories to the Ways and Means Committee after simply being asked to describe how getting cut off of benefits has affected them. I share a sample of these stories because they inspire a sense of urgency as Congress reconvenes. I hope that you will receive them as if they were here in person because if they were able to walk the halls of Congress and tell their stories I am confident this institution would not turn its back on them.

As you know, the Senate in early April passed a bipartisan, fully paid-for bill to extend unemployment benefits for five months.

You said recently that "we get elected to make choices. We get elected to solve problems." Our nation has a long-term unemployed problem, with 35% of the unemployed out of work for more than six months. I urge that these stories illustrate the need for the House to act so that a financial lifeline can be restored to 2.8 million Americans, keeping them tied to the labor force they so desperately seek to return to and benefitting the American economy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you to permit a debate and vote on the Senate-passed bill.

Sincerely,



Sander M. Levin
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means

Daniels, Cincinnati, Ohio

I own my home and I am faced with losing it over delinquent property taxes. I'm losing the car I had. Got a title loan to job search and eat. My child needs new school shoes and coat and clothes. Not to mention utilities and insuring. Dishwasher broke first today dryer broke. In the winter our pipes broke. I feel like people are killing themselves so kids will get fed. It breaks my heart. Please help us.

Natalie, Tucson, Arizona

I was the sole employee of a sole proprietor. He retired in January 2013. Two months prior to his retirement I started looking for new employment in the same field. I continued looking in the field for several months after. Unemployment Insurance was the only means for me to pay my housing and transportation costs to continue to search for employment. Then the engine in my car blew. I started riding the bus to any interview I could get. Now I don't have any means to get to an interview. As of April 30th I will become homeless because I owe 4 months rent. My landlord carried me as long as he could. By the grace of god I still have my phone thanks to my brother who has 2 kids in college. I continue a diligent work search at my local library but now I will be without an address.

Alisa, Corona, California

My husband lost his job just one month after losing his mother. On 5/3/2013 we were thrown into a kind of chaos we had never known. Married for 20 years, both of us had always worked - three kids, two dogs and a mortgage on the house we have lived in for 17 years. We used his 401K to survive, in addition to the unemployment payments he received right up to December 28th. Unemployment he had never collected in his 30+ years of working. I am a Special education Teacher, supporting a family of five. My salary is good, but not quite enough to support an entire household. For the past three months we have played the "which bill can we not pay" game. It is unconscionable for Republicans to be so cavalier about the unemployed, especially since it's been passed when unemployment was lower than it is now. We did everything right,

worked hard, raised a family, paid our taxes - and now that we need help, those who have been elected to serve the people are only interested in serving themselves.

Aaron, Escondido, California

I very rarely insert myself in discussions involving politics. However, I feel compelled to share my story considering how it is a microcosm of what is going on in the country as a result of the political gridlock that has resulted in the expiration of unemployment benefits for millions of millions of Americans. I joined those ranks this week. It's a scary time for my family, as we have literally one \$100 bill left and will not be able to pay our rent next month. I have a 10 year old son and a 4 year old daughter, and the specter of them being homeless rips at my insides on a nightly basis. Am I a lazy freeloader who is living off the government? No. I have looked for work high and low, with no success. Should my family be penalized because two political parties cannot reach some type of consensus? I would like to believe that wouldn't happen, but the reality is that this is happening to me and the millions of people left in a crushing limbo.

Michael, Lomita, California

I worked consistently from 1972 through 2013. My company closed its location and I was laid off. I have been very aggressive in applying and interviewing for jobs. I have also been assisting my girlfriend pay for her chemotherapy medication. In December my Unemployment was discontinued. In the past few months I have ruined my good credit, begged relatives to help me pay rent, and been told I was "an entitled scavenger". I have also had to watch my girlfriend skip her steroid shots, too humiliated at not being able to pay. Apparently some politicians believe rent payments and bill collectors can be put off. Apparently they believe Leukemia can, too. After having worked for decades, I feel so betrayed by my country the one moment in my life I need help.

Genesis, Patterson, California

I lost my job June 2013, I had unemployment for 6 months before it was not extended. The effects of losing my unemployment were quick and severe. My husband works 10 hours a day and commutes 3 hours a day but we still couldn't afford to keep our rental. We were evicted, forced to move a half an hour longer away from where we were already living and commuting for work. We are constantly struggling to keep food in our fridge, and our utilities on. For my 27th birthday this year we had to borrow money from family to pay \$200 to PG&E to keep our gas on. I have a 2 year old son who is effected by this everyday but we do everything we can to hide our pure stress. My husband works hard, commutes everyday but we are drowning. I have had interviews and applied to places that are offering half of what I used to make. I am a corporate level Admin, I have history working in a major corporate settings and CPA firms. The market is horrible, I have never in my life had a problem

landing a job. If we get our unemployment extended, even for just the 5 months, I can pay growing utility bills, fix our one car that is our major lifeline, and put money away for bills and food until I can find any job that will have me. Desperation set in months ago, now every time something breaks in my house-I can't help but cry. Knowing full well I cannot replace anything.

Wendy, Sacramento, California

I am a 30-year-old woman with a young child and husband. I was laid off from my renewable energy administrative job in May 2013. Since that time I have submitted countless applications and had only 3 interviews, 2 of which I'm still waiting to hear back from. I was so thankful to have received UI benefits to help my family survive, but since it ended on Dec 28, our finances have drastically gone downhill. We are past due on nearly every bill, despite cutting out everything but necessities. I know that I'm a good worker and I know that I have done everything in my power to get a job, but nothing is coming. I feel as though I am swimming as hard as I can, yet I'm still drowning. I am embarrassed, I am ashamed, and I am angry that my family is on the verge of losing everything. If there's one thing I'd like for all Americans to understand, is that UI benefits are truly a lifeline to workers who lost their job to no fault of their own. We are not out living it up; most people can't do that even if they wanted to (UI benefits are on average 36% of the workers former wages). What we are doing with that money is paying for necessities like rent, gas, utilities, and food for our family. I never thought I'd be in this position and one day it could be you.

Kristen, San Diego, California

May 2013 I lost my job of 8 years (20 years with the organization), I was able to collect unemployment for six months from my state, then switched to federal unemployment. Then in December was cut off just like millions of others. My two boys and I were not living this high life while receiving unemployment. It was paying the bills and putting food on the table. To date I have applied to 260 different jobs, some with my former field and mostly others outside of my field. With each rejection letter I become more depressed, all I want to do is work and provide for my children. With a lack of income, I had to go apply for welfare. The welfare amount given to me does not cover all of my bills, without the help of family I have no ideas where I would be.

Robert, North Ft. Myers, Florida

Unemployment insurance makes things possible that I could not otherwise get. Things like prescriptions, toiletries, cleaning supplies and some cooking supplies. I have been unemployed since November and the unemployment checks have already run out.

Randall, Powder Springs, Georgia

I'm in dire need of the Congress to reinstate unemployment. Thank God my wife has been carrying me this whole time most people don't have anyone to help out in their household. I've been looking for a job very hard in these times. I have even went to the local 32 Union Hall and got on their list for a call back but still haven't received a call. So I am asking you on the 28th to reinstate the federal unemployment assistance. Thank you and God bless America.

Annie, Chicago, Illinois

I am college educated with 30+ years experience and a very current skill set. I support 4 teenagers (left abusive husband 10 years ago) solely on my own. Lost my job along w/112 others in 7//2013 due to sale of my division to competitor with better systems whose own employees took over the work. I never received any EUC; my IL state benefit ran out in 1/14. I am desperate. Five years ago I would get calls from recruiters; now at age 50 and having done over 500 online applications - each resume and cover letter tailored to the specific position - I have still received NO job offers. I can hardly land interviews for positions paying \$20K less than my previous salary. You folks need to do the right thing and pass SB3979 or HR4415 in the House on 4/28. Payments would maybe happen in May. June will be too late for all 3 MILLION of us. Working class folks cannot go 6 months with no incomes. There HAS to be a way to bring it up for vote. So many [long-term unemployed] cannot beg or borrow any more money and we have literally lost a lifetime of security in only 4 months."

Nichole, Decatur, Illinois

I am a mother of 4 boys, I am 34 years old and have worked since the day I turned 14, I had been at my last employer for 5 years and am laid off due to lack of work. I have an associate's degree in business administration and am 16 credits short of having my bachelor's degree in business management. I have not received a check for unemployment since December 28th. I feel as if I have worked my whole life and never asked for a hand out and now I am barely making ends meet! I have used my savings and without this passing and back pay I will lose everything.

Lori, Pleasant Valley, Iowa

In July 2013 my administrative position of 16 years was eliminated due to economic downturn. At that time I was forced to rely on unemployment benefits to maintain my household. I have applied for jobs daily since that time. As a 52 year old female, I am either over qualified or under qualified. I feel age has played a huge factor in my job search. My 26 weeks of unemployment benefits ended in January 2014. With no income I have used all of my savings and retirement funds. I am now on the verge of losing my home to foreclosure. I have worked my entire life and have never asked for any type of assistance. I am now on food stamps and Medicaid. I never thought I would get to this point. I pray that the House approves the extension of

unemployment benefits and job training to give me a needed hand out of this horrible situation.

Danielle, Lexington, Kentucky

I lost my job in March 2013. I came back from vacation that morning and was handed my pink slip. I'm a single mother but I'm 45. I would have never thought I would be out of work this long! I applied for jobs before I even went to the unemployment office, but soon realized I was going to have to make a change. I lived in Corbin at the time so I cashed out my 401k and moved to Lexington where I thought I would have more opportunity. But the truth is there is little opportunity anywhere in KY. I have gone back to school and am in a nursing program but even that hasn't helped. It will in the future but I haven't even been able to get interviews for housekeeping and food service jobs. I need help!!!

Debbie, Baltimore, Maryland

I have been working since can remember. I have been working for this one company since 1998. Well I was let go in 5/2013. I am a 58 year old female. I have been looking for work for almost a year and still am. I have exhausted all my saving to get by. I am currently attending a community college to attain my GED while I look for work. When I was getting the unemployment benefits I was able to get by with paying of bills. I'm really afraid that I will become homeless unless the benefits are extended or I find employment. I am very discouraged about finding a job because of my age. Please extend the benefits I am not asking for more.

Sharon, Edgewater, Maryland

Please act to reinstate the long term unemployment. Time is running out for me in my position. Not only are my savings gone but my credit is being ruined as well. I am not lazy and look for work every day but until I do find work these benefits are keeping me a viable, employable American.

Michael, Chesterfield Twp., Michigan

I am in the construction industry (skilled trades) and was laid off Aug 5, 2013. In part due to the miserable winter and in part due to the still struggling economy in southeast Michigan, I haven't been able to find long term employment. I have worked for 5 different companies since August, knowing they could only hire me for a couple weeks because they just didn't have enough work to keep me. I was never fired, never laid off due to a lack of skill or insubordination or for not being a hard enough worker or for any reason except a lack of work. Each contractor told me they were happy with my performance on the job and wished they could keep me longer, as well as, taking the extra step of letting me know the door was open for my return once they landed more jobs and needed to hire again. I am now out of unemployment and waiting for a call. I don't want to be another "foreclosed"

statistic. I don't want to be the family in the neighborhood that lost their home. I don't want my children to have to change schools. I don't want my kids to have to move from the home they feel safe in and have known their entire short lives. I don't want to be a failure! Members of Congress, you can help me and others just like me. You can extend and/or reinstate benefits for a short time to help us weather this storm. A new job is within reach, I can feel it! I just need a little more time, a little help from all of you.

Glen, Clinton Twp., Michigan

I am a Skilled Building Tradesman of 26 years. My world has been turned upside down in the last seven years. This Michigan economy has not bounced back the way other states have. As a Union Sheetmetal Worker, I CAN leave this state and be productive elsewhere. Am I stupid for staying on a sinking ship? My daughter has two more years before graduating High School. I will make my choice then. Why can we not throw out a lifeline for our citizens during this turmoil. Comeback has not happened for my family, and at this rate I will be off the Marvin rolls and seeking help from others, at a cost to the taxpayers. Mind you.... I was one for over 30 years.

Bill, Taylor, Michigan

I have been working in building trades since 1999. As work began to slow I was forced to look for work outside Michigan only after I began to lose things. The extension helped me out tremendously because...well since nobody cares...gas is not free...food is not free...required expensive auto insurance is not free. Without an extension I would join the growing number of folks whom now live under bridges. I can't even find a scholarship to go back for training because I'm not on welfare.

Skyler, Minneapolis, Minnesota

I've been unemployed for the past year after getting laid off from the school district where I was gaining experience to be a teacher. I took classes in the evening as well as online and worked a part time job while looking for a full time job. Unemployment was a way for me to make ends meet. I finally found a job teaching and was accepted to graduate school but need to pass licensing tests to teach, these tests costs money about \$125 each one and I need to pass 4. I have no more money to take these, therefore in essence by not extending unemployment republicans are preventing me from working not "helping me find a job" as Speaker Boehner says he is.

Debbie, Festus, Missouri

I lost my job back in November, just last week I exhausted my unemployment benefits. I am a single mother of two daughters. The only income I have coming in now is my child support, which is not enough to live on. I am about to lose everything if this doesn't pass. I have applied to so many jobs, went on numerous interviews and nothing. I am soon going to be homeless, because I

can't pay for rent. I don't know what else to do, I have never had to worry about this before. I am depressed, can't sleep. I don't want to be here anymore because I can't provide for myself or my daughters.

Stephanie, Middle Village, New York

I have just recently become unemployed (9/13/13) and ever since then been applying for jobs both in my skill set and outside of it. But ever since my initial 26 weeks of unemployment ran out it has gotten harder and harder to look for work and pay the bills let alone put food on the table. This unemployment extension must be put through because by not having that amount of money weekly it only gets harder to look for work because you have no way of paying for public transportation to get to that interview.

Patricia, Rochester, New York

I am very grateful for my state's support in my participation in the 599 program so I can upgrade my skills to re-enter the workforce in New York. When my benefits lapsed January 6, 2014 through April, 2014 I was uncertain if I would be able to complete my training. I had no gas money to get to my program and my attendance was poor during the winter months I maxed out my credit, and sold belongings and even resorted to dumpster diving to find objects to sell to pay my rent and bills. I consider myself to be one of the lucky ones. The GOP neglected to understand that UI cuts to job trainees runs counterproductive to the intent of the Skills Act HR 803. It is outrageous and ludicrous that opponents deny assistance to those in the process of upgrading their skills, albeit longer than 26 weeks. It is pure double talk. Gratefully, in April I received new state funding and anticipate graduating in June. I hopeful that I will find work at age 60!

Mitch, Henderson, Nevada

I am a 55 year old Republican. I lost my job in 3/13. It is the FIRST time I've ever been out of work and on UI or any Govt help. I lost my job to no fault of my own after 8 years. I have been sincere about looking for work. I am an innocent sincere jobless human being who happens to vote Republican. My UI ended 12/28/13. Since I have had to sell much of what I had to pay rent and main bills. My family helps me when they can. But I am at my wit's end. Come May I am out of ideas and not much left to sell. And do not see a way to pay my rent. I have gone to bed hungry more than once. It has gotten to point where I do not have gas to put into car to look for work. And my internet will be turned off May 2. And will not be able to even look for work. I have worked my entire life since I was 18. And for the first time need some help. Please don't turn your back on me.

Richard, Springfield, Oregon

September 4 2013, on the same day, my wife and I lost our jobs. Both age related. Over 60, the company she worked for wrongfully fired her, admitted

this gave her a small settlement. My place of employment was laying off, firing employees, many older employees lost their jobs, one had a heart attack and died. My wife. Well-educated, highly experienced could not find employment. Eventually she was hired for much less then her last job. I have had a number of interviews with no success, I do addiction work, and treatment has went away from successful outcomes. My skills do not meet the new standard, I was very successful and this is not a desirable skill set anymore.

Denise, Bensalem, Pennsylvania

I am a 47 year old divorced woman. I have 20 plus years experience as a medical receptionist/biller and many other duties. I was laid off a year ago. I apply for work and go on interviews with no luck. Now that the EUC ended I lost my phone and if I didn't have an amazing family I would be on the streets. I can't keep asking them for money. I no longer can afford to pay for gas. I can't buy anything. I am begging you to please pass EUC benefits and not so much for me but for the people who lost their homes and can't eat.

Megan, North Wales, Pennsylvania

I have been unemployed for 13 months. Up until December my children and I were struggling but making ends meet. When UE stopped on December 28 our life support was cut off. It's extremely difficult to raise 2 children alone without money. Job hunting is a full time commitment and it is also very expensive. I was unable to maintain payments or insurance on my car so I have to rely on friends and family for rides or for money to take public transportation. My landlord's kindness is dwindling and my children and I are looking at the harsh reality of being homeless. I worry about the bills, the future but I mostly worry about the emotional long term this is going to have on my children. When I lost my job my children's sense of security was rocked but with unemployment payments we were able to keep our heads up but now we have been rocked beyond comprehension and we are fearful. My children are afraid and this is not a burden they should have to carry. I pray for common sense to prevail within the government so that they will #renewui and give families a fighting chance at survival.

Crystal, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

I'm 48 years old. Worked all my adult life, raised 3 children, paid for my home, paid my taxes. Always had a job never used unemployment. Lost last job at no fault of my own June 2013, now they say I'm lazy. Wow. Working 30 years without every asking for help. I played by the rules now I can't pay my bills. 200+ applications nothing. Got one call but had no money to go to interview.

Claire, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

After more than 30 years loyalty, I was laid off and have been unemployed over a year. I have applied for hundreds and hundreds of jobs and have so far been unsuccessful. I originally hoped to make about the same amount of money as

my last job, now I hope to get a job, making ANY amount and I still cannot find anything! It is very difficult to manage a household with two children and a husband who has been laid off three times in the last year. I understand the huge cost of the extension, but I hear the government approved to send tens of millions of help to the Ukraine, just last week. What About help for Us Americans?

Barbara, Abbeville, South Carolina

My whole life has been spent working starting at about 8 years old picking strawberries, then babysitting and cutting grass, cleaning houses, working in tobacco and finally at 15 I got my social security card and started working and paying taxes. My company went out of business overnight without any notice. I have been searching for a job for a year now. I went to an interview last week and was so excited about finally finding a job and paying the people back that have been helping me since 12/28/13. Needless to say they hired the younger person for the position, I am 57 years old and a cancer survivor. I could have got on disability when I had cancer, but I wanted to go back to work and I did 2 weeks after treatments. I have never drawn unemployment before now and it really helped a lot, now I am having to borrow money from family and friends just to have gas and pay my insurance to go to a interview. I am expecting my roommate to evict me at any time. I feel so hopeless, had to swallow my pride and get food stamps so I could at least eat. It would be a Godsend to me to receive the unemployment retroactive money to try and start my own business and get back to work. Please help me!

Ron, Knoxville, Tennessee

I was laid off by the hospital that I worked at for ten plus years a year ago tomorrow. I have applied to over two hundred fifty companies to yield three callbacks and none have hired me. I lost my benefits like the almost three million others due to Congress allowing them to expire. We have since had power cut off once internet and cable still out. We are getting food stamps, TennCare and I am thankful for that (my wife had her gall bladder removed last Friday) she is not working for two weeks with her meager hours she gets no sick or vacation pay so not sure how May will go. I will give up retroactive payments if they will let a steady flow of income come back in. I would gladly take any job that would take me. However my flawless track record as a health professional is obviously not enough.

Janet, Montpelier, Virginia

I strongly believe that Emergency Unemployment Insurance benefits should be extended. At 60 years old and my husband at 64, we are struggling financially and emotionally worse than we ever have in our lives. I pride myself and my husband for being good citizens and hardworking tax payers all our adult lives, but it is disheartening to be faced with our situation in life at this time.