



NEWS

Oregon Legislature - House Democratic Caucus

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House Democrats Stand Up for Middle Class Oregonians Still Looking for Work

Pass Legislation Extending Unemployment Benefits to Help Struggling Families

SALEM – The Oregon House today approved legislation extending unemployment benefits to middle class Oregonians who are still trying to find work in today’s job market. State Rep. Nancy Nathanson (D-Eugene) led passage of both SB 637 and SB 638.

SB 637 extends federal unemployment benefits from between 13 and 20 weeks by reconnecting to the federal process for determining eligibility. Some 50,000 Oregon workers who have exhausted all other unemployment benefits will be the recipients of these benefits. The bill passed 57-0.

SB 638 allows for an additional six weeks of benefits for some 15,000 Oregon workers, paid from the state’s solvent Unemployment Trust Fund. No general fund dollars are used in paying unemployment benefits. The bill passed 49-9 with all House Democrats present voting in favor.

“Oregon’s job climate is improving. We added 9,700 private sector jobs last month – the biggest single month gain since 1996. And our unemployment rate fell to 10.2% - the lowest in over two years. That’s great news,” said Nathanson. “But for these 65,000 middle class families, the recovery hasn’t reached them yet. These dollars may well mean the difference to these middle class families in keeping their homes and keeping food on their table.”

State Rep. Betty Komp (D-Woodburn) said these benefits are not targeting the chronically unemployed, but will benefit the tens of thousands of Oregonians who have never been out of work for such an extended period of time.

“In my district, hard-working people who have never been on unemployment before are still trying to find work, still trying to keep their families afloat,” said Komp. “These few

weeks of extra benefits may very well mean the difference between surviving this global recession or losing their homes.”

State Rep. Greg Mathews said for his district, any chance to get additional federal dollars to pay unemployment benefits is welcome news for struggling families.

“Many of these workers have been paying their federal taxes for decades and getting little in return. For us to approve a bill that allows them to get some of those federal dollars back makes good business sense, especially when we know those dollars would go to the unemployed in some other state,” said Mathews. “We need to keep middle class folks in their homes with food on the table or it will cost us far more down the road.”

Both bills now head to Governor John Kitzhaber for his signature.

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