



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Help on the way for unemployed Oregonians *Senate takes swift action on two bills extending unemployment benefits*

SALEM – The Oregon Senate took up two bills this morning that will extend unemployment benefits to Oregonians who continue to struggle with finding work in this tough economy. Senate Bill 637 provides an extension through the federal Extended Benefits and High Extended Benefits program, helping an estimated 50,000 eligible Oregonians. Senate Bill 638, concerning Oregon’s Emergency Benefits Program, will help an estimated 15,000 claimants.

“Oregon’s recent employment numbers show signs of improvement and hope for those who are still on the job market,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland), chief sponsor of the bills with Sen. Brian Boquist (R-Dallas). “But there are still over 200,000 Oregonians who need help surviving in this dire economy. These extensions provide much-needed assistance, helping families keep food on the table and a roof over their heads while they continue looking for work.”

February’s employment report showed that seasonally adjusted payroll employment grew by 9,800, Oregon’s largest one-month gain since November 1996. Despite these gains, the statewide rate was reported at 10.2 percent, essentially unchanged from 10.4 percent in January.

“These are dollars that provide real help to Oregon families and their communities because the money is spent directly in our local economies, at our neighborhood grocery stores, and on other local services,” said Senator Joanne Verger (D-District 5), co-carrier of SB 637. “There’s still too many Oregonians looking for work. These extensions help them stay afloat and avoid other, costlier, social services.”

The bills now go to the House for their final vote. They passed out of the full Ways and Means Committee on Friday.

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