

I strongly support today's legislation, H.R. 4759 to extend unemployment benefits at a time of economic hardship for families in Oregon and across the country. There are currently over 106,000 unemployed workers in Oregon and as many as 3.8 million nationally who are struggling with the rising cost of food and fuel.

Today's legislation will immediately provide up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits in every state to workers exhausting their 26 weeks of regular unemployment benefits. In states with levels of unemployment at 6 percent or higher, an additional 13 weeks would be available for a total of 26 weeks of extended benefits.

In my home state of Oregon, our economy has weakened but remained at the relative national average of 5.5%. However, that is an unemployment rate 0.5% higher than this time last year. Although Oregonians would not qualify at this time for the second extension of benefits, it gives me peace of mind to know that safety nets are in place if the Oregon economy gets bleaker. Many in Oregon well remember the downturn in 2003 when during the summer the unemployment exceeded 8.5%, the highest in the country.

During major economic slowdowns, unemployed workers are the hardest hit. Not only do they suffer a loss of wages, but they face a tighter job market in which to return. Extending these workers' benefits is not only morally correct; it is also good for our ailing economy. The Congressional Budget office estimates that every \$1 spent on unemployment benefits generates \$1.64 in new economic demand.

I am pleased that Democrats has moved quickly to pass this benefits extension for the workers who need it most. I hope that the Senate will move quickly and the President will refrain from vetoing this legislation so that American families can get the help they need.