

APRIL 19, 2004

**SCHAKOWSKY, ILLINOIS DEMOCRATS LEAD FIGHT ON BEHALF OF UNEMPLOYED WORKERS
UNABLE TO FIND JOBS
IN BUSH ECONOMY**

CALL ON PRESIDENT BUSH/SPEAKER HASTER T TO EXTEND FEDERAL EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS TO THOUSANDS OF JOBLESS WORKERS IN ILLINOIS

CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined members of the Illinois Congressional delegation and Senator Dick Durbin (R-IL) in [leading the fight on behalf of unemployed workers](#) unable to find jobs in the Bush economy.

At a news conference with unemployed workers in Chicago, where the jobless rate is 6.8%, Schakowsky and her colleagues called on President Bush, Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) to immediately support the passage of 13-week extension of federal unemployment benefits to aid laid off workers. Unemployed workers are eligible for 26 weeks of state benefits; however, federal assistance expired on December 31, 2003.

"Families are drowning in late notices and unpaid bills, but they won't get a lifeline from President Bush or Speaker Hastert. President Bush and Speaker Hastert are refusing to extend emergency federal unemployment benefits so millions of Americans can get a few hundred dollars a week just to survive," Schakowsky said.

"If we have time in Congress this week to vote on bills to name Post offices and to recognize the 91st meeting of the Garden Club of America, we can certainly find time to pass this emergency legislation," Schakowsky added.

About [3,540 unemployed workers in Illinois](#) are exhausting their state benefits each week. Schakowsky and her colleagues are demanding that the White House and the Republican leadership in Congress pass legislation to provide an additional 13 weeks of federal assistance to these workers. The average unemployment insurance benefit in Illinois is about [\\$291 a week](#).

"Until we have a new economic plan that will put back to work the millions of people who have lost their job under the Bush Administration, extending federal unemployment insurance is the least we can do," Schakowsky added.

[A report requested by every Democratic member who represents the Chicago metro area was released at the news conference.](#) According to findings in the report that was prepared by the House Government Reform Committee Minority staff:

. In the first 3 months of 2004, an estimated 35,410 workers in the Chicago metro area and 52,800 workers in Illinois exhausted their state unemployment benefits and are no longer eligible for federal emergency assistance.

. In the first 6 months of 2004, an estimated 61,600 workers in the Chicago metro area will exhaust their state unemployment benefits. Statewide, that number is 91,928.

. In the Chicago metro area, workers would receive up to approximately \$233 million in unemployment benefits between January 1 and June 31, 2004 if federal emergency benefits are extended. This would result in a stimulus to the local economy of up to \$403 million because it is estimated that every dollar paid in extended unemployment benefits boosts economic output by \$1.73.

**STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY
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"I am very pleased to be here today with my colleagues from the House and our state's senior Senator, Dick Durbin. I also wish to thank Bob, Stephanie and others for joining us and for being willing to share their personal struggles. Soon, you will hear their courageous stories.

"Families are drowning in late notices and unpaid bills, but they won't get a lifeline from President Bush or Speaker Hastert. I have received letters and emails from my constituents who are struggling to keep their homes, pay the rent, buy their medicine or feed their family. A constituent who worked for ten years but was recently laid off writes:

.It has been five months . and my unemployment benefits are about to run out.I have bills like every other American and I don't know what to do when these benefits run out. When I was working I was earning around \$40 thousand a year and now I have \$600 every 2 weeks coming in. I have always said you do what you can with what you have. What do you do with zero? When I hear the job market is improving, I would like to know where. I just want a real reason why we don't have the option of extended benefits? What are we to do?

"Unfortunately, he is not alone. Thousands of workers in Chicago and Illinois are in the same miserable situation. President Bush and Speaker Hastert are refusing to extend emergency federal unemployment benefits so millions of Americans can get a few hundred dollars a week just to survive. Instead of traveling around the country trying to

convince the American people that the economy is getting better, President Bush should spend more time in Washington convincing Congress to pass emergency federal aid to help laid off workers.

"On average, 3,540 jobless workers in Illinois are exhausting their state unemployment insurance each week. By June 31 of this year, a total of 61,600 workers in the Chicago metro area will lose their safety net of federal emergency unemployment insurance. Republicans want us to believe that the economy is actually getting better and people will be able to find jobs in the future. But in the meantime, they are ignoring the reality that thousands of Illinois families are hurting today. In Illinois, the unemployment rate is 6% and in the Chicago area, it is 6.8%."

"The Republicans made room in the budget so President Bush can get a \$31,000 tax cut this year, but they won't make room for Bob and Stephanie to get \$300 a week just to survive. Certainly, we have the room. It is only a matter of priorities.

"If we want to get the economy moving again, we need to put money in the hands of people who need it and who will spend it. We know that for every dollar spent on unemployment benefits, we get back a \$1.72 in economic stimulus. So if Congress extends unemployment benefits, we will experience a stimulus to the local economy of up to \$403 million.

"Until we have a new economic plan that will put back to work the millions of people who have lost their job under the Bush Administration, extending federal unemployment insurance is the least we can do. If we have time in Congress this week to vote on bills to name Post offices and to recognize the 91st meeting of the Garden Club of America, we can certainly find time to pass this emergency legislation"