

Out of work, out of luck

Congress allows extended jobless benefits to expire

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Thousands of New Yorkers braced for a grim and grinchy holiday as a strife-riven Congress allowed extended unemployment benefits to lapse for millions of Americans.

"The human tally of this is heart rending. This is the worst time of year for this," said New York State Department of Labor Commissioner Colleen Gardner. "These benefits keep hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers out of poverty and are also a boost to our economy."

"It's an outrage," fumed Lasana Akachi, who was applying for Unemployment Benefits yesterday at the Harlem Workforce One Center. Congress is "playing politics with people's lives."

The cessation of benefits will affect Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients at all levels, said Gardner. Those receiving the basic 26 weeks of UI will not be able to receive 20 additional weeks. Similarly, the "46-weekers" will not be allowed to collect 13 additional weeks when their current claim runs out, and so on. The average New Yorker receiving UI takes 33.9 weeks to land another job, said Gardner.

Lacking an extension, 95,000 people in New York City and 200,000 statewide will have exhausted their benefits by Dec. 31.

130K
 New Yorkers to lose benefits this week

400K
 New Yorkers who will lose benefits by May

15M
 Unemployed people in the U.S. who have been out of work at least six months

9.6%
 National Unemployment Rate

9.2%
 NYC jobless rate



Job seekers line up in March to attend a work fair in Brooklyn. Congress allowed unemployment benefits for many to lapse yesterday. (GETTY)

Gardner advised UI recipients to continue certifying for benefits each week in the event Congress passes an extension.

Lawmakers face a difficult decision, observed Sangeeta Pratap, Hunter College Professor of Economics: UI benefits prevent recipients from succumbing to financial ruin and boost consumption, but "also put a certain floor on the type of job," recipients are willing to accept. "High wage jobs are not being created in the same proportion

as low wage jobs," noted Pratap. Accepting an inferior, lower paying job "is a bitter pill to swallow and it's not your fault, but you still have to swallow that pill."

Republicans in Congress argued that while they want to help the jobless, the funding for a benefits extension should come from spending cuts.

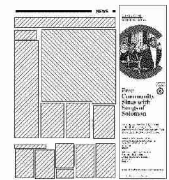
Rep. Scott Brown (R-Mass.), who opposed the extension, said it would have added to the already-heaving deficit. (WITH TIM HERRERA)

Despair, anger and vows for political retribution were swiftly registered in cyberspace.

"I just hope everyone remembers this when it comes time to vote," **Alesia Crews** posted on the NY State Department of Labor's Facebook page.

"The GOP disgusts me. No unemployment benefits, but tax cuts for the super rich are ok?" tweeted **theshoegazer**.

"Nice move, GOP. ... Maybe you can kick puppies next," tweeted **dave_in_sa**.



TIPS FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Experts recommend things to do when you run out of unemployment benefits:

1 Get a “bridge job.”
 With the holidays coming up, stores will be hiring temps. Also, companies might need a hand with tax and financial closings. H&R Block often hires people

to help with taxes. Anything from working as a barista to a bartender can get you through the short term.

— **Pam Lassiter**, author of “[The New Job Security, Revised: The 5 Best Strategies for Taking Control of Your Career](#)”

2 Tap your own skills. Many people



(GETTY)

don't realize that they have valuable skills that other people are willing to pay for, such as

a second language or even craft skills. To get ideas for how to earn extra money, check out the services section on Craigslist and see what people are advertising – editing, gardening, and event planning. [It] can help get you back on your feet, plus it gets you valuable job experience.

— **Kimberly Palmer**, personal finance columnist for US News & World Report

3 Crack down on your expenses.

Stop buying anything that you don't eat or use in your job search. No subscription TV, no broadband (get that at the coffee shop or the library), no movies. Nothing, nada, zilch.

— **Don Asher**, author of the forthcoming “Cracking the Hidden Job Market”

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