

Washington, DC -- In response to rising unemployment across the country, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) ushered legislation through the U.S. House of Representatives today which would provide 3.8 million unemployed Americans with assistance to face skyrocketing fuel and food costs while they continue to seek employment.

“Recent unemployment has exposed what too many American already know – people who want to work are having a hard time finding jobs to support their families,” **said Arcuri, who managed debate for the bill on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives**. “Extending unemployment benefits to those hardest hit by rising costs, loss of employment and economic uncertainty is critical to make sure local workers can continue to look for work, take care of their families and contribute to the local economy.”

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act (H.R. 5749) to immediately provide up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits in every state to workers exhausting their 26 weeks of regular unemployment benefits. In New York State, 259,215 individuals would potentially benefit from this extension.

“Due to the weak economy, and especially recent high gas prices, folks are struggling to make ends meet while they look for work,” **said John Furman, President of Central New York Citizens in Action, Inc.** “Extending unemployment benefits is really a life-line to help local residents hit by unemployment pay for the basic necessities.”

H.R. 5749 was blocked from passage yesterday when a majority of House Republicans failed to support extending unemployment benefits.

In May, the unemployment rate surged to 5.5 percent from 5.0 percent - the biggest one-month jump in more than 20 years. The unemployment rate is now a full percentage point higher than a year ago.

This legislation aims to help struggling workers and their families, while protecting local

businesses from decreased sales during an economic downtime. According to the Congressional Budget Office, every \$1 spent on unemployment benefits generates \$1.64 in new economic demand. In New York, an extra 13 weeks of unemployment benefits would infuse \$600 million dollars into the state economy.

H.R 5749 does not increase the national debt or tax rates. Federal unemployment trust funds, which have more than enough reserves to cover the cost, will finance extended benefits.

A copy of Arcuri's floor speech in support of H.R. 5749, as prepared for delivery, is attached below:

**The Honorable Michael A. Arcuri
In the House of Representatives
Rule Providing for Consideration of H.R. 5749
Opening Statement**

June 12, 2008

M. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules I call up House Resolution 1265 and ask for its immediate consideration.

For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Washington, Mr. Hastings. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have five legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials into the Record.

Thank you, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

M. Speaker, House Resolution 1265 provides for consideration of H.R. 5749, the Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 2008. The rule provides one hour of debate

equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

M. Speaker, our economy is in trouble and hardworking Americans across the country are bearing the weight. Times are especially tough for middle class families.

The labor market continues to deteriorate;

The price of gasoline and food continues to rise;

The value of real estate continues to decline; and,

Millions of American households are forced to rack up more and more credit card debt just to make ends meet. And we're not talking about frivolous expenditures – middle class families are racking up credit card debt to do things like paying their electric bill and buying school supplies for their children.

M. Speaker, the American people deserve better.

Since the beginning of this year, when the Majority first began to push for an extension of unemployment benefits, the national unemployment rate has surged to 5.5 percent – the largest one month increase in over 20 years.

Yesterday, 144 members of the Minority made it clear that they don't think this situation is serious enough to warrant extending unemployment benefits for Americans struggling to make ends meet, so we're here again today.

To me, 8.5 million unemployed Americans -- is a very serious situation.

To me, trying to fill up your car with gas at \$4 a gallon when you just lost your job -- is a very serious situation.

And to me, when so called "free trade agreements" are moving jobs across the border and no new quality jobs are being created -- is a very serious situation.

M. Speaker, I believe government should lend a hand when its citizens are struggling – especially hard-working middle class families. But whether you agree with that or not, extending unemployment benefits is one of the most cost-effective and fast-acting ways to stimulate the economy.

Putting money directly into the pockets of struggling workers ensures it will be spent quickly on daily necessities – boosting our economy and making it a little easier for folks to make ends meet. Every dollar spent on unemployment benefits generates a dollar and sixty-four cents in new economic demand. In my home state of New York, an extra 13 weeks of unemployment benefits would infuse \$600 million dollars into the state economy.

For my constituents in Upstate New York, a struggling economy and high unemployment has been a fact of life for a very long time now. My district hasn't reaped the so called "cyclical job growth" benefits from trade agreements. We lost the jobs alright, but we haven't seen the job creation. In fact, employees of businesses in my district have applied for trade adjustment assistance over 200 times since the program's inception. And of those applications, the Labor Department certified over half as a result of trade agreements. Unfortunately, as factories close, hard working folks have no where to go, but stand in line outside the local unemployment office. The American people deserve better.

And that's why we're here today. This bill would provide up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits in every state to workers exhausting their regular benefits, and provide an additional 13 weeks to states with higher unemployment levels.

Federal unemployment trust funds, which were created exactly for this type of situation and have more than enough reserves to cover the cost, will finance these benefits. This cost will not

be deferred to our children to pay back. And the trust fund will do so in a structure very similar to the Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation program established in response to the last recession in 2002. An emergency extension, I might add, which was passed by the previous Republican Congress, in the same way we're doing today, when there were fewer long-term unemployed workers.

Extending these benefits for struggling Americans is the right thing to do. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this rule and the underlying bill.

Thank you, I reserve the balance of my time.

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