



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Legislation to Provide 13 Weeks of Extended Unemployment Benefits for Jobless New Yorkers approved by Senate Finance Committee

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Bill Expected to Head to Floor for Vote by Full Senate Next Week

(Albany. NY) State Senator George Onorato (D-Queens), the chairman of the Senate Labor Committee, today announced that legislation (S.4110-A) he sponsors to permit New York to receive more than \$600 million in federal stimulus funds for unemployment benefits and administration has been approved by the Senate Finance Committee. As part of this legislation, an additional 13 weeks of extended

benefits will be provided to jobless New Yorkers already receiving aid, and funding will also be made available to support benefits for newly unemployed workers.

The legislation, which was passed by the Senate Labor Committee on April 20th, is now expected to head to the Senate floor for a vote by the full house after unanimously passing the Finance Committee yesterday. The funding is being made available as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

“I could not be more pleased that this vital legislation, which will provide an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits for New York’s jobless, is now moving swiftly towards becoming law,” said Senator Onorato. “Unemployment benefits for some 56,000 jobless New York residents are slated to begin running out next week, with at least 5,000 more a week after that. Passage of this legislation will provide unemployed New Yorkers with critically needed financial assistance during very difficult economic times. This is a win-win for unemployed workers in need of aid, as well as for local economies that will benefit from the money these New Yorkers will spend on food, rent and other basic needs in their communities.” All told, the extended benefits will ultimately aid some 120,000 unemployed workers now receiving assistance.

The legislation, initially proposed by Governor Paterson as a program bill, is expected to be considered today by the Assembly Committee on Labor. The 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits funded under this bill would be in addition to 33 weeks earlier approved by the United States Congress and the 26 weeks of regular jobless assistance provided under New York state law.

Under the legislation, several hundred million dollars in federal stimulus funding will also be used to help stabilize New York’s Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, which pays out benefits for unemployed workers. In light of the growing numbers of jobless residents in New York, the Trust Fund has become insolvent. To qualify for this Trust Fund support, New York needed to conform its state unemployment law to ARRA language for individuals who must leave their jobs for compelling family reasons, including domestic violence and the illness or disability of an immediate family member. All of these compelling reasons have long been recognized under New York State case law and statutes, and the legislation will not create new grounds for benefit eligibility in New York.

“This legislation will ultimately provide truly critical relief for 120,000 job-seeking New Yorkers who are now in imminent danger of losing unemployment benefits that they need to stay afloat and off of the public assistance rolls,” said Senator Onorato. “I am greatly anticipating its final passage by the Legislature and immediate approval by Governor Paterson.”