

“Jobs Bills” Under Consideration in the 111th Congress

Summary of Legislation

April 2010

With unemployment hovering near ten percent, multiple “jobs bills” designed to stimulate job creation and economic recovery have been introduced or passed by Congress. While these efforts are vital to getting America back to work, workforce development advocates know that job creation alone is not enough—services and supports that help workers get through periods of extended job loss are critical to family economic stability, while access to education and job training programs are necessary to ensure workers have the skills to do the jobs created through federal investments.

It is likely that additional jobs bills will be considered by Congress, as congressional Leadership has suggested it plans to work on a jobs bill (broadly defined) in each work period. It is possible that a variety of bills—including legislation such as the Highway bill, climate change, or the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)—could be considered under this broad rhetorical umbrella.

Key Legislation Relating to Job Creation, Job Training, and Unemployment Benefits¹

H.R. 2847 – Jobs for Main Street Act of 2009

Originally passed by the House of Representatives in December 2009, this \$154 billion bill included significant new investments in infrastructure, fiscal relief to preserve education, law enforcement, and other public jobs, and a six-month extension of unemployment insurance (UI) and COBRA health insurance subsidies provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (“Recovery Act”). In addition, the bill provided \$1.25 billion in new training funds under the Department of Labor, including:

- \$500 million in additional WIA Youth formula grant funding, to be used for summer youth employment programs; and

¹ Numerous jobs bills have been introduced by many Members of Congress. This summary is limited to those bills introduced by Leadership or key committee chairs.



- \$750 million for competitive grants for training and placement of workers in high-growth and emerging sectors. Of that total, \$275 million would be for job training in energy efficiency and renewable energy careers as described in the Green Jobs Act, while the remaining \$475 million would go to support projects in other high growth and emerging industries, with a priority on health care training.

The Senate stripped out the House language and replaced it with the HIRE Act (see below), which the House agreed to and was signed into law March 18. Elements of the original bill have emerged in other legislation, including summer jobs funding (under H.R. 4899), funding for public service employment (under H.R. 4812), and extensions of UI/COBRA (multiple bills).

H.R. 2847 (as amended by Senate) – Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment (HIRE) Act

Senate substitute to the Jobs for Main Street Act (*see above*). Includes \$13 billion in tax credits for employers that hire unemployed individuals, an extension of highway bill through end of 2010, “Build America Bond” provisions, and extends increased expensing limits for small businesses. Does not include additional funding to support job training or education programs. Signed into law on March 18.

H.R. 4851 – Continuing Extension Act of 2010

Would extend UI and COBRA benefits originally authorized under the Recovery Act through the beginning of May 2010 (the current extension of these benefits will expire the first week of April 2010). The National Employment Law Project estimates that more than 210,000 individuals will lose UI coverage for each week that the programs are not reauthorized. Passed by House March 17; Senate adjourned for the Easter recess—and will be out until April 12—without taking up the bill.

H.R. 4849 – Small Business and Infrastructure Jobs Tax Act

Primarily focused on extending the “Build America Bond” program and providing other small business tax relief, but also includes an extension of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Fund through September 2011, and provides an additional \$2.5 billion in funding to support the program. More than 30 states are developing or have implemented subsidized jobs programs using these funds, leading to employment for as many as 160,000 low-skilled workers. The current language would extend coverage to programs serving 1) individuals from needy families, regardless of whether they are receiving TANF benefits and 2) individuals who have exhausted (or will soon exhaust) UI eligibility. Passed by the House March 24; the Senate has not yet considered this bill, although a similar amendment to extend the TANF Emergency Fund previously failed on a different Senate bill (*see H.R. 4213 below*).



H.R. 4899 – Disaster Relief and Summer Jobs Act

Provides supplemental appropriations to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for disaster relief, and would also provide \$600 million in WIA Youth formula funding to support summer youth employment programs for an estimated 300,000 individuals between the ages of 16 and 24. Passed by the House March 24; Senate has not yet considered the bill.

H.R. 4213 - American Workers, State, and Business Relief Act. (The “extenders” bill)

In addition to a range of tax credit extensions for businesses, would extend Recovery Act UI and COBRA provisions through the end of 2010. Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and John Kerry (D-MA) introduced an amendment to this bill to extend and increase funding for the TANF Emergency Fund and provide additional funding for summer youth employment, but it was not adopted by the Senate. Passed by the House in December 2009, and by the Senate on March 10; expected to proceed to formal conference in the coming months.

H.R. 4812 – “Local Jobs for America Act”

Introduced in March 2010 by Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Chair of the House Education & Labor Committee, the bill would invest \$100 billion over two years to directly support the creation or retention of more than one million education, law enforcement, and other public service jobs. In addition, the bill would invest \$500 million to place 50,000 low-income workers into on-the-job training (OJT) slots under WIA. Strongly supported by national anti-poverty groups, unions, and others—National Skills Coalition has endorsed the bill—the bill currently has 105 House cosponsors. Representative Miller will push to move the bill after the Easter recess.

The bill would provide:

- \$75 billion to state and local governments to support the creation or retention of as many as 750,000 public service jobs. Approximately 70 percent of these funds would be made available directly to local governments serving communities with populations of at least 50,000 (“entitlement communities”), while the remaining 30 percent would be made available to state governments to support local governments not located in entitlement communities and community-based organizations. Funds must be used to: 1) preserve existing local government jobs that would otherwise be eliminated due to budget constraints; 2) provide funding to nonprofit community-based organizations to offer services not normally provided by local government; or 3) create new local government jobs. Funds must be used to support “full-time, full-year” positions (including school year positions), and must cover 100 percent of employee compensation for individuals hired under the program. Recruitment efforts must target individuals who have been laid off from restored positions, individuals who are receiving or have exhausted eligibility for unemployment benefits, long-term unemployed individuals otherwise ineligible for unemployment benefits, and veterans.



- \$500 million in dedicated funding to support local OJT programs, of which \$250 million shall be used to provide OJT to individuals residing in high-poverty areas.
- \$23 million for an “Education Jobs Fund” for states to provide awards to local educational agencies and institutions of higher education to create or save educational jobs. States would be subject to maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements.
- \$1.18 billion under the Department of Justice’s “Community Oriented Policing Services” (COPS) grant program to support the hiring or rehiring of an estimated 5,500 law enforcement officers.
- \$500 million under the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s “Firefighter Assistance Grant” program to support the hiring or retention of firefighters.