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December 1, 2011

John A. Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. Capitol, Room H-232
Washington, DC 20515

Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. Capitol, H-204
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi:

We write to urge House leadership to put politics aside and act now to protect the unemployed and create jobs. The American people cannot wait.

The U.S. economy continues to struggle to recover from the recent recession. The pace of the nation's job growth has been anemic, causing unemployment rates to remain consistently high. In fact, the growth of both employment and output has been the slowest when compared to all recession recoveries since World War II.

In October 2011, the Chairmen of the Federal Reserve referred to long-term unemployment as a "national crisis" that should be a top priority of the Congress. We fervently agree. Congress must show leadership to protect citizens and stimulate our economy so that our nation can weather this protracted period of economic hardship. As Members of Congress, it is our job to help and protect people. As we near the end of 2011, it is more than necessary that we enact legislation that helps those most in need. Therefore, to address the national unemployment emergency that exists, we must:

1. Extend current federal unemployment insurance programs through 2012;
2. Enact policies to aid those who have exhausted federal benefits, such as by allowing an additional 14 weeks of benefits; and
3. Create jobs.

Congress must immediately extend current unemployment insurance programs and provide full extended benefits through 2012. With persistently high unemployment numbers, the need for federal unemployment assistance remains a critical lifeline to help our citizens who are suffering. There are approximately 6.4 million fewer jobs now than at the beginning of the Great Recession, and the Department of Labor data show that there are over 4.2 unemployed Americans for every job. Needing unemployment assistance is about being unable to find work in a weak economy with limited job opportunities. Even if every job was filled, 8.9 million citizens would remain unemployed. Federal long-term benefits are essential supports for workers who have paid into the insurance program. The Census Bureau and the Congressional Research Service found that unemployment insurance benefits kept 3.2 million out of poverty—861 thousand of whom were children. A one-year



extension of current benefits prevents 2.2 million unemployed people from losing their benefits by February 11th and another 4 million from losing them during the remainder of 2012. We resolutely believe that we must act by early December to protect unemployed workers and their families.

Extending current unemployment benefits further will promote economic recovery. The Congressional Budget Office determined that unemployment benefits are “both timely and cost-effective in spurring economic activity and employment.” Indeed, the Congressional Budget Office found that unemployment insurance is the most effective policy for increasing economic growth among the 11 options it examined. An analysis by the Urban Institute of unemployment benefits during the current crisis demonstrated that – consistent with prior research – for every \$1 spent on unemployment benefits, the economy grew by \$2. The Economic Policy Institute estimated that preventing the expiration of unemployment benefits could create or prevent the loss of approximately 560,000 jobs, with analysis by the Urban Institute study showing that unemployment benefits have their greatest positive effects on job savings and creation during periods of high unemployment. Further, failure to extend current unemployment benefits immediately will cause a major blow to the retail sector during the critical holiday shopping season, as evidenced by the dramatic losses experienced by the retail industry during the summer of 2010 when Republicans allowed these benefits to lapse. At the end of the 111th Congress, we extended the Bush tax cuts, giving businesses and the wealthiest Americans additional funds for two years. We should at least give the same benefit for Americans workers seeking employment to protect our families and economy.

In addition to extending current emergency benefits, it is critical to the well-being of our citizens and our economy that we provide assistance to those who have exhausted their benefits, such as providing an additional 14 weeks of emergency unemployment compensation. Recent data demonstrate that most unemployed Americans no longer receive unemployment insurance benefits. In 2010, 75% of the unemployed received benefits; however, the current figure is approximately 48%. This statistic reflects the crisis that exists for the millions of Americans who have exhausted their benefits and still cannot find work. Although the number of unemployed has remained stable during 2011, the number of Americans receiving benefits has dropped precipitously. In contrast to previous recessions in which the longest average duration of unemployment was 21 weeks in July 1983, the current average hit 41 weeks in September 2011. It is vital that we amend our safety net to reflect the protracted economic hardship that our nation and citizens are experiencing. Assisting our citizens during a time of national emergency so that they can purchase basic human necessities such as food and shelter is a sign of responsible leadership.

Finally, it is imperative that we pass real jobs legislation now. While recent economic data report a moderate decrease in the unemployment rate, having 9% of Americans out of work is far too many. In our congressional districts, unemployment outpaces these record high national statistics; in many cases, our communities are struggling with 15% unemployment. By now, we all understand the stagnant economic condition in which our country finds



itself. The economy will only continue to worsen if we do not act quickly to address it.

Politics has continued to trump legislative productivity. Enacting policy solutions that create opportunities for the American people to be self-sufficient – able to care for themselves and their families -- should be our top priority. To stand idly by and allow our nation's economic condition to deteriorate in the name of politics as usual and early campaigning at the American people's expense is outrageous.

The American people have made it clear that creating jobs should be our number one priority. President Obama has introduced a solid bipartisan jobs plan, *the American Jobs Act*, which will put millions of Americans back to work. The members of the CBC have seen first-hand the desperate need for job creation through our *For the People Jobs Initiative*; where tens of thousands of our constituents stood in line for hours to apply for jobs.

Our constituents want to work; they need to work. As legislators and as a Caucus, we are doing all that we can --introducing H. Res. 348 and over fifty pieces of legislation that directly address job creation. If enacted, our *Create, Protect & Rebuild* jobs proposal creates millions of American jobs. We need the entire Congress to put politics aside for the betterment of the country. Unemployed Americans, struggling families and communities cannot wait. These are actions which cannot wait until the 11th hour. We need to act to protect the unemployed and create jobs. We need to act now.

Sincerely,



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Chairman
Congressional Black Caucus

Danny K. Davis
Chairman
CBC Education and Labor Taskforce



Emma Sumner

J. M. Hunter
M.D.

George
~~George~~

~~George~~

Philip Jackson See

Hopie Waters

Nanny Davis

Baker See

Frederic Wilson

~~Gregory~~

Chas. Felt

Corrine Snow

John Lewis

Marcia T. Judge

~~Benjamin~~

~~Donnerstag~~

Frank Johnson

B. M. S. J.

William F. White

Abner J. Hastings

Wm. Lucy Clay

Elijah E. Cummings

Samuel B. Boring

John B. Boring

Eleanor H. Nelson

Jeni Sewell

Genevieve M. Orr

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Karlene

Hansen Clarke

J. D. [unclear]

Kath Ellison

James G. Ayler

Yvette D. Clarke
Fournis

Donna F. Edwards

Jan Scott

John Conyers

Genevieve [unclear]

Betty [unclear]