



Vital Unemployment Insurance Benefits Are Threatened In South Carolina

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Unemployment in South Carolina remains painfully high, making unemployment insurance (UI) benefits a crucial support for South Carolina's workers, families, and economy.

- South Carolina's unemployment rate of 9.5 percent in December 2011 was one of the ten highest in the country.¹ In 2011, over half of jobless workers in South Carolina were unable to find work after more than six months of searching.²
- More than 1 in 6 residents of South Carolina, and more than 1 in 4 children, lived in poverty in 2010.³ **Poverty would be even more widespread without UI benefits**, which kept an average of 54,000 people (including 9,000 children) in South Carolina from falling into poverty annually in 2009 and 2010.⁴
- UI provides time-limited assistance to workers with substantial employment histories who cannot find jobs. UI helps support South Carolina's economy by pumping an estimated \$2 into the economy for every \$1 spent on the program.⁵

South Carolina's UI benefits are modest – and have already been slashed.

- Average weekly UI benefits in South Carolina are just \$235, the sixth lowest in the country.⁶
- Last year, South Carolina cut the number of weeks jobless workers can receive regular state benefits from 26 to 20 weeks – the fewest weeks of state benefits in the country.

Instead of helping jobless workers get back on their feet, two bills advancing in the state Senate would block access to critical UI benefits for many South Carolinians:

- **S. 1026** would deny benefits to part-time workers by repealing a measure South Carolina put into effect just last year so it could claim \$97 million from the federal government. This bill would be especially harmful to women, who make up two-thirds of the state's part-time workforce and are more likely than men to have child care responsibilities or other family obligations that conflict with full-time employment.⁷
- **S. 1069** would make seasonal workers who have lost their jobs ineligible for any benefits during the off-season. Thus, a worker who takes a low-wage cleaning job at an amusement park would be left with no benefits when the park closes for the season and she can't find other work.

Other harsh and punitive measures toward jobless workers are waiting in the wings. South Carolina workers and their families struggling in this tough economy deserve better!

1 U.S. Dep't of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

2 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations from U.S. Dep't of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment, 2010 (Table 26).

3 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey (Table C17001).

4 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2010 and 2011 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (using CPS Table Creator II).

5 Wayne Vroman, Urban Institute & IMPAQ Int'l, The Role of Unemployment Insurance as an Automatic Stabilizer During a Recession (2010).

6 U.S. Dep't of Labor, Employment & Training Admin., Monthly Program and Financial Data.

7 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations from U.S. Dep't of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment, 2010 (Tables 16, 23).