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Democrats

**Opening Statement**  
**Rep. Pete Stark**  
**Joint Economic Committee Hearing**  
**April 2, 2004**

Thank you, Chairman Bennett. I want to welcome Commissioner Utgoff and thank her for testifying here today.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) March employment situation shows that the unemployment rate edged up slightly to 5.7 percent. More than 8 million Americans remain unemployed – with 2 million out of work for 6 months or more. While 308,000 payrolls jobs were created, this was the first significant job gain of the entire Bush presidency. We are still in a deep hole and we can't really talk about a jobs recovery until we see robust job creation for several months.

March marks the third anniversary of the Bush jobs slump – the most persistent jobs recession since the 1930s. Overall, the economy has lost 1.8 million payroll jobs since President Bush took office in January 2001. When you take out growth in government jobs, and focus on just the private sector, the loss is even more staggering: we are 2.6 million jobs in the hole since President Bush took office. The manufacturing sector alone has lost 2.8 million jobs.

We've been gaining jobs slowly since August, but at the pace we've seen so far, it would take nearly 1 ½ years to erase the current jobs deficit. Job creation would have to average over 184,000 jobs per month from April 2004 to January 2005 just to erase the current 1.8 million Bush jobs deficit completely.

Besides the more than 8 million Americans officially unemployed, another 5 million people want to work, but are out of the labor force and not counted among the unemployed. The unemployment rate would be nearly 10 percent if you included them and those who are forced to work part-time because of the weak economy.

Even though jobs grew in March, we still have a huge jobs deficit and long-term unemployment rose again last month. House Republicans have thwarted efforts by Democrats to help nearly three million unemployed workers and their families avoid financial ruin by extending temporary federal jobless benefits for the next six months and retroactively for the last three months. Treasury Secretary Snow has said that President Bush would sign an extension of benefits if a bill reached his desk. But the Republican leadership has made this the 'do-nothing for unemployed workers' Congress. The long-term jobless deserve additional unemployment benefits now – the President and the Republican-controlled Congress should just do it.

I look forward to Commissioner Utgoff's testimony today.

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