

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of extending emergency unemployment. This legislation, of which I am a proud cosponsor, is a common sense, non-controversial measure that will help American families.

The unemployment situation in our country is a national emergency. Over the past two years, millions of jobs have been lost as a result of the worst recession in 70 years, caused by Wall Street excesses and an unregulated housing market. Millions of Americans are unemployed today - but through no fault of their own. Our neighbors, our friends, and our families are the ones who agonize as the economy slowly recovers. We cannot afford to abandon the unemployed members of the American workforce, and I won't stand by silently and allow these lifelines to expire.

Unemployment benefits help millions of unemployed Americans help meet the basic needs of rent, food, and transportation while they search for jobs. Any family receiving unemployment insurance would tell you that these benefits do not provide for a luxurious lifestyle without financial worries. These same families would tell you that without these benefits, they will lose their home, lose their car, and lose the ability to feed their children. If the federal government does not assist these out-of-work Americans with emergency unemployment compensation, then they will fall to the next level of the social safety net, requiring public housing assistance, seeking medical care in hospital emergency room, or turning to food shelves to put dinner on the table.

We have seen the proof that these benefits significantly stimulate economic growth while making the difference in the lives of struggling Americans. Economists from both sides of the aisle agree that unemployment benefits go directly into the economy, stimulating the kind of activity that creates jobs. And we have never before let federal emergency unemployment expire while the unemployment rate is anywhere close to this high.

I challenge my Republican colleagues who say this legislation is unaffordable to come to the floor right now and tell me how they can pay to give the richest 2 percent of Americans \$700 billion while holding this lifeline hostage. Every single vote against this extension is a vote to impoverish more American families. Every single vote against this legislation is a vote against economic growth. Every single vote against this bill is a vote against the middle class.

Our economy will recover. But until our economic growth is fully restored, I simply refuse to abandon America's families during their time of greatest need.

Madam Speaker, I yield back.