

Dear Congressman,

I would like to take a few moments of your time to tell you my story. I am a member of the “Long-term Unemployed”. I have been unemployed since August of 2006. Along with some 6.1 million others in the United States, I have been Unemployed for well over the 27 weeks established as a national guideline. I have searched for a job in one form or another every day since becoming unemployed due to lack of growth in the telecommunications industry.

In the days since becoming unemployed I have seen career counselors, had my resume written and re-written over a dozen times, attended well over one-hundred “networking” meetings, attended classes given by my local church, volunteered with civic organizations as a way to get my foot in the door, sent out over two-thousand resumes and applications, as well as two hundred-fifty introduction letters, attended numerous job fairs, and spent over twelve thousand dollars for recruiters and classes. My numerous friends and business associates I have garnered over my years of work can barely take care of themselves when I have tried to call in the favors owed. As a result of my work to find a job/career, I have had seventeen interviews, and worked a total of thirteen days. Of the thirteen days of work all were “training” days used to evaluate and appease equal opportunity hiring guidelines where I was deemed “unfit for the position” due to my age or physical limitations.

I have encountered age, social, and regional bias and discrimination as well. My age, lack of degree and having transplanted from New York to Florida all work against me in my job applications as well; I have applied to local colleges for re-training only to be advised not to do so due to age and experience level. I have diverse management, engineering, and technical skills, and have worked in large-scale, high visibility markets for major telecommunications carriers. I have even worked in disaster recovery in Lower Manhattan after 9-11 restoring communications to Wall Street and the rest of the world. I have lead teams and individuals of varying education, skill and ethnicities in entry level and highly technical positions even that needing security clearance to work in the Pentagon in Washington DC.

I have worked consistently and constantly since the age of thirteen. I have supported local business, and worked developing business for others. I do not have a resume filled with short-term positions; all of my employment (with the exception of my last position) has been five years or longer. I have paid my taxes, supported growth and expansion but yet cannot find anyone who will look at my skills and take a chance. Over qualified for entry-level positions, under-qualified for executive positions I am caught like so many in the middle. Too old to start again, approaching middle-age without any experience if I re-train, and trying to dodge age-discrimination that is all too prevalent, if I do not re-train, I do not fit into the employer’s mindset that a degree is needed for even the lowest of positions. I have been told that I am often “too smart”, my experience is too diverse, and that I am seen as a threat to even those who interview me for positions lower than theirs as I soon will be replacing them because of my vast experience.

In my time as an unemployed American, I have collected the 99 weeks allowed in combination of Federal and State Unemployment, lost medical coverage due to expense, but not missed paying a bill. My credit rating has not declined, and I continue to use my Unemployment Benefits to pay bills and feed my family. In the periods when Unemployment Benefits were over or being debated by the Federal Legislature, my mother of seventy-eight has supported me. She has paid my bills, made my car payments, car insurance payments and supported my family. The extent of her support even goes to her taking a reverse mortgage on her home as she couldn't support herself and me on her Social Security. In 2007, I met a local Orlando woman who married me despite my financial and employment woes. Without my mother and wife's support both financially and emotionally, my anger, depression, sadness, and feeling of uselessness would have taken over and possibly lead to sad results.

I'm writing you to plead for an extension of Unemployment benefits beyond those currently Federally funded and due to expire, perhaps a Tier 5 and 6 if needed.

Thank you,

Thomas Melius