Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 14, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
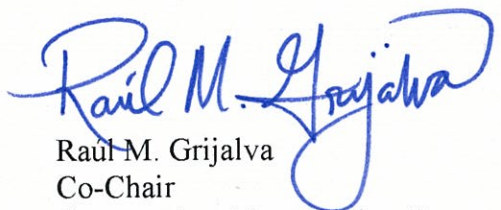
Dear Senate Majority Leader Reid:

Thank you for your leadership in fighting for those still struggling to find work. We urge you to prioritize a clean Senate bill that extends Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC). A fight over unrelated cuts in order to satisfy a disproven austerity agenda is unnecessary. In fact, it would jeopardize future attempts to address real emergencies like the ones currently faced by those Americans that are struggling to keep their heads above water while they search for work.

As with normal emergency funding, these benefits have been extended many times in a bi-partisan fashion without including offsets. It is fiscally responsible to pass a bill without including additional cuts which could stifle the positive economic impact. Congress should never place conditions on providing an emergency service to the people of the United States.

The unemployment rate is still far higher than it was when President George W. Bush signed the emergency benefits program into law. Cutting unemployment benefits now will damage our recovery. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that failure to extend emergency assistance for the long-term unemployed could lead to the loss of more than 300,000 jobs this year. None of these facts are in dispute. The only question is how long it will take to address the problem.

Every day we wait brings a family closer to losing their home. Every day we wait is a day a child may go hungry. The American people need help. Congress has the ability to provide relief. Acceding to demands for another austerity hostage will have real impacts. The Congressional Progressive Caucus supports immediate passage of a clean bill to extend this important lifeline to millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

Raúl M. Grijalva
Co-Chair
Congressional Progressive Caucus

Keith Ellison
Co-Chair
Congressional Progressive Caucus

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