



PRESS RELEASE

January 16, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rep. Stewart sponsors legislation to increase UI benefits Increase will help in state's economic recovery

ALBUQUERQUE—Albuquerque Representative Mimi Stewart (D-Dist. 21) has crafted legislation that would increase unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. Currently, employees who have been laid off receive just 53.5 percent of their weekly wages in the form of UI benefits. Rep. Stewart's legislation would raise that to 60 percent.

"We have one of the most solvent trust funds of any state, but the money does no one any good if it just sits there," said Rep. Stewart.

Economists agree that UI benefits are a key component in an economic recovery. Betty Sparrow Doris, Secretary of the NM Department of Workforce Solutions, concurs. "Given our state's current economy, any additional assistance that would benefit our claimants would be appreciated. The unemployment insurance program is an essential component of the state's economic recovery effort," she said.

"Economists will tell you this money is pumped right back into the economy in the form of mortgage and rent payments, utility bills, and other necessities like groceries and medication," said Bill Jordan, Policy Director for New Mexico Voices for Children. "It's essential to keep families from going hungry and losing their homes, especially when the job market is this tight."

The legislation is written so that the increase is temporary and sunsets after two years. "We can take another look at it then, when hopefully the economy and job market are stronger," said Rep. Stewart.

The child advocacy agency has worked on the UI benefit issue before, convincing the Legislature in 2003 to add a weekly \$25 benefit for each recipient's dependent child. "We're very fortunate to have had bipartisan support for helping the unemployed, and we're grateful to have Rep. Stewart leading this new effort," said Jordan.

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.
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