



Contact: Rich Templin
Florida AFL-CIO
Phone 850-224-6926
Cell 850-566-4348

135 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
Mike Williams, President

Florida AFL-CIO

Press Release

Florida's Unemployed Workers Will Continue to Lose the Lifeline of Extended Benefits If Florida Legislature Refuses to Act Swiftly

The Florida AFL-CIO and the Coalition for Fair and Comprehensive Tax Reform Call on Governor to Expand Special Session Call to Include Fixing Florida Statutes for the Unemployed

Tallahassee – Florida AFL-CIO President Mike Williams was joined by the Chair of the Coalition for Fair and Comprehensive Tax Reform and long-time worker advocate Karen Woodall at a press conference today to call attention to a little discussed problem with Florida's Statutes that will prohibit Florida's workers from participating in the Federal Unemployment Extended Benefits program, even if the United States Senate re-authorizes the program later this month. Senate leaders in Washington are working to overcome opposition in the Congress to provide funding to continue a program that provides lifeline payments to the long-term unemployed during the current jobs crisis. While recent reports from D.C. indicate that a resolution to the impasse is forthcoming, Florida's workers will not be able to receive these lifeline payments because Florida Statutes include an expiration date of June 5th. As tens of thousands of Florida's workers have exhausted their benefit payments each week, news accounts have focused on the federal role in this crisis and not addressed the fact that even if the program is re-authorized in Washington today, hundreds of thousands of workers will still lose their lifeline payments due to legislative inaction.

Mike Williams said, "According to the Agency for Workforce Innovation, almost 35,000 workers are losing their only real source of income each week while Congress continues to stall the re-authorization of the extended benefits program. The fact that these workers and our economy will continue to suffer when Congress does act because of a single line in Florida Statutes is appalling. This program costs the state next to nothing and does not raise unemployment insurance rates for businesses. It does however, allow workers who have lost their jobs during this time of economic crisis to provide for their families and continue participating in Florida's struggling economy. This is as important, if not more important than anything else during the upcoming session."

The Extended Benefits program, which is 100% federally funded, will provide over \$290 million for unemployed workers. The Agency for Workforce Innovation calculates that for each dollar in payments to the unemployed \$1.64 in economic activity is generated meaning that without that over \$475 million in potential economic stimulus will be lost if the Florida Legislature does not make this simple change to the statutes so that workers in the state can participate.

Karen Woodall said, "This is such a simple fix for the legislature to do and it will help 35,000 workers every week. It will keep people fed, in their homes and allow them to patronize local business so that the current economic disaster does not worsen. Every unemployed worker who loses this critical lifeline is a lost customer for local business. It costs the state nothing but for struggling working families this is everything."

For Release Thursday, July 15th 2010

The Florida AFL-CIO and others have reached out to the Governor for weeks to take action on this problem so that if and when the federal government continues the program, Florida's workers will be able to participate. The Governor has shown an interest but there have been no commitments thus far. Williams said, "Over the next few days we will increase our efforts so that this very simple fix, changing a date in statute, can be undertaken for the benefit of Florida's workers and our economy. Stopping oil drilling is important for the economic security of our state, this is equally as important."

###