



For Immediate Release  
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**BAUCUS EXAMINES SUSTAINED UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE,  
EXPLORES OPTIONS TO SAFEGUARD AMERICA'S JOBLESS**

*Finance hearing addresses current condition of unemployment insurance benefits,  
implications of sustained high unemployment for future legislative action*

**Washington, DC** – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) in a hearing today explored the current condition of unemployment insurance benefits in the face of prolonged joblessness and a stabilizing economy. Witnesses included representatives of Unemployment Insurance beneficiaries, employers, states and economists, and offered a diversity of views to inform members as they consider future legislative action. Baucus fought for additional unemployment insurance for out-of-work Americans as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and moved legislation to shore up the Unemployment Trust Fund in fiscal year 2009 prior to the August work period.

**“Many experts and economists agree the economy is stabilizing. That’s good news. But nearly 15 million Americans are still looking for work and the economy continues to shed jobs. Today, we opened an important discussion about the unique challenge of this recession, and the responsibility of Congress to act boldly and creatively to address it. This recession is unique because, on average, workers have been unemployed for more than 24 weeks – that’s longer than during any previous recession, and 51 percent will exhaust their eligibility for benefits this month,”** said Baucus. **“Unemployment insurance has been critical to helping folks get by while they retrain or search for a new job. With millions of workers looking for jobs, this support is vital and the dollars spent putting food on the table and paying the bills promote a healthy economy. I will continue to explore this issue and I am committed to a common-sense response to the real problems these working families face each day.”**

Currently, 9.7 percent of the U.S. population is unemployed and seeking work. The extension of unemployment benefits provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is set to expire in December, 2009. In addition, 1.3 million people are due to exhaust their Unemployment Insurance benefits by the end of this month, with 1.9 million expected by the end of the year without new employment.

Opening statements and full video footage of today’s hearing may viewed on the Finance Committee website here: <http://www.finance.senate.gov/sitepages/hearings.htm>.

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