**U.S. Senators Reach Bipartisan Agreement to Restore Emergency Unemployment Insurance for Five Months**

*New Reed-Heller emergency UI agreement supported by 5 leading Democrats and 5 leading Republicans*

**WASHINGTON, DC –** Seeking to boost the economy and provide relief for the more than 2 million job seeking Americans who have lost emergency unemployment insurance coverage since December 28, 2013, a group of 10 U.S. Senators led by Jack Reed (D-RI) and Dean Heller (R-NV) today announced an agreement to reauthorize emergency unemployment insurance (UI) benefits for 5 months.  The bill is cosponsored by Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), Rob Portman (R-OH), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and ?, and Dems TBD.  The plan will allow for retroactive payments to eligible beneficiaries going back to December 28th.

This new legislation seeks to strengthen the U.S. economy while providing vulnerable job seekers and their families with a vital lifeline as they continue to look for work.  The proposal is fully paid-for, with $137 million in deficit reduction, using a combination of offsets that includes extending “pension smoothing” provisions from the 2012 highway bill (MAP-21), which were set to phase out this year, and extending customs user fees through 2024.  The bill also includes an additional offset allowing single-employer pension plans to prepay their flat rate premiums to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC).

Further, the legislation includes a provision modeled on Senator Tom Coburn’s (R-OK) language that ends unemployment insurance payments to any individual whose adjusted gross income in the preceding year was $1 million or more.  According to 2010 income tax data, there were 0.03% of filers that earned over $1 million and received some form of UI at either the state or federal level.  The Coburn provision received unanimous support in the Senate when it was voted on in 2011.

The legislative proposal also includes language to strengthen reemployment and eligibility assessment (REA) and ReEmployment Services (RES) programs.  In an effort to help get job seekers back into the workforce, individuals receiving emergency unemployment compensation will be eligible for enhanced, personalized  assessments  and referrals to reemployment services when they begin their 27th week of UI (Tier I) and 55th week of UI (Tier III).

“There are a lot of good people looking for work and I am pleased we’re finally able to reach a strong, bipartisan consensus to get them some help.  Restoring this much needed economic lifeline will help job seekers, boost our economy, and provide a little certainty to families, businesses, and the markets that Congress is capable of coming together to do the right thing.  It has now been 75 days since UI expired and it needs to be renewed.  We’re not at the finish line yet, but this is a bipartisan breakthrough.  I am grateful to my many colleagues on both sides of the aisle who worked constructively to find a way forward.  I join Rhode Islanders and millions of people across the country in calling on Congress to pass this essential, common sense legislation without further delay and take additional action to help save and create jobs,” said Reed, noting that about 8,000 Rhode Islanders have lost their UI coverage since the benefits were cutoff on December 28th and more than $20 million worth of unemployment checks have gone undistributed in Rhode Island as a result of UI’s expiration.

“These past few months have been extremely difficult for thousands of Nevadans who have been unsure how to pay the bills or feed their families. I am so glad that both Democrats and Republicans have come together on a proposal that will finally give Americans some certainty about their unemployment benefits. This deal extends these important benefits for five months, pays for them, and brings buy-in from both sides of the aisle. I am grateful to Senator Jack Reed and to Senators Collins, Portman, Murkowski and Kirk for the determination and hard work involved in order to reach this point,” said Senator Dean Heller. As many as 21,000 Nevadans have lost their unemployment insurance benefits since they were cut off in December.

Now that the bill has been introduced, it must pass a 60-vote threshold to overcome a filibuster.  Reed and Heller expressed confidence that they would have more than enough votes to advance the measure in the U.S. Senate.