

To Be Equal =

by
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Jobless Aid Needs Reform



The pressures of increased unemployment in this recession year are behind the build-up of support for drastic changes in the unemployment compensation laws. These changes in a structure relatively untouched since its beginnings about forty years ago, are long overdue.

Unemployment compensation is a worker's first line of defense against the economic ravages of joblessness. Financed by a tax on employers, it provides basic income during the period of lay-offs or job loss. With almost five million people officially counted as unemployed, this program is of special importance right now.

The problem is that payments are too low, don't last long enough, and don't cover enough workers. In fact, the program designed to help tide workers over bad times is more often used to restrict their benefits and the consequent tax drain on their employers.

It's time for a sweeping reform of the unemployment compensation system to include all workers, raise their benefits, extend duration of coverage, and put the whole under tighter federally-mandated standards.

Wider coverage is a necessary improvement. The program excludes many millions of workers, including farm workers, domestics, public employees and reentrants into the work force. The result is that about four out of ten officially unemployed people can't collect unemployment compensation.

The program works to provide minimal protection to long-time employed and unionized industrial workers while denying it to less-skilled, lower-paid working people, forcing them onto welfare in times of job loss. The benefits scale hasn't kept pace with wages and prices either. Since the states run the program, benefits and other regulations vary from state to state, but in most places benefits amount to less than the current poverty level.

This defeats the purpose of the program, which was not to keep people in poverty but to assure a minimal loss in living standards for workers who suffer temporary job loss. Federal - mandated benefits of up to two-thirds previous working salary are needed.

Other restrictions need to be stripped away, as well. During recession periods workers tend to be unem-

ployed for longer periods. The federal overnment has met his need for extended benefits by financing extra weeks of payments beyond state requirements.

But even this is hedged with restrictions that limit its use by the unemployed, and it only applies when national unemployment rates for insured workers only, are very high. This rate measures neither true unemployment nor locally high unemployment rates, so once again the purpose of the program is defeated.

Since benefits are tied to duration of employment, and since workers usually laid off on a "last hired, first fired" basis, even those that qualify for compensation often exhaust their benefits long before the statutory maximum number of benefit weeks runs out. There is no reason to doubly penalize a worker in this way and it's another example of how the system works against those that need it most.

New entrants into the labor force aren't covered at all. Most are teenagers, whose national unemployment rate is 16 percent with black youth suffering a phenomenal 34 percent unemployment. In addition to crash public hiring programs for youth, some consideration ought to be given to drawing them into the unemployment compensation program, and thus, to access not only to some pocket money but more importantly, to state employment agency job offerings and training programs.

FISHING REPORT

Changes in resident license fees enacted by the recent legislature include a new two-day, three dollar fishing permit; \$7.50 hunting license, an increase of \$2.50 over last year; and a combination hunting-fishing license for \$14.00, a savings of one dollar over the separate price of each.

There is no grace period allowed under Nevada law for the purchase of new licenses. All who hunt or fish after June 30 must have the appropriate license in their possession.

Youngsters under the age of 17 years must present proof of having possessed a prior hunting license issued by a Fish and Game Department, or they too must successfully pass a hunter safety training course before purchasing a 1973 hunting license.

Hunting licenses are required at age 12, regardless of whether a person hunts big game, small game or waterfowl with hunter safety training a requirement before the license may be purchased.

Hunter safety courses are offered by certified volunteer sportsmen instructors on a continuing basis and training may be taken at any time prior to the purchase of a hunting license. Call Department of Fish and Game for further information.

Hot summer days may make some people feel like sitting in the shade and doing nothing--- but not avid anglers in southern Nevada, looking to take a big trout or possibly other fish from Lakes Mead and Mohave.

Fishing is generally good on most waters during spring, but it often slows down in summer as fish seek cool water deep in the lakes. Anglers should change their tactics to match the change of fish habits.

Trolling deep or fishing on the bottom with bait will help get the fishhook where the fish are. This usually requires a boat, except at areas around the lakes where deep water is near the shore.

Fishing in shallower areas, early and late in the day, and deeper areas during the middle of the day usually will result in nice catches of fish.

The unemployment compensation program was one of the most visionary of the reforms of the 1930s but it has been allowed by atrophy to the point where it is now more of an obstacle to economic equity than it is a needed cushion against unemployment. Thus, its reform should be a priority item in this recession year.

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