

January 27, 2014

Dear Senator King -

I am writing to you today, and also Senator Collins, as a Maine resident who has been out of work since June 7, 2013. I am a single mom (age 42) of two young boys, ages 4 and 7, living with my parents with \$3.90 left in my bank account. I can't remember when I last had a solid night's sleep because my every thought is consumed by when I will finally find a job and I can't find a way to slow my mind enough to relax enough to actually sleep. It spins and spins and spins all day and all night as I worry about how to put food on the table, pay for my car (which I will soon lose), my cell phone (which I desperately need to be able to find work) and all the other various bills that I have. On top of that, I have not had health insurance since August 31, 2013 as I cannot afford it.

I'm not lazy and I'm not unmotivated. I am a graduate of both the University of Virginia with a degree in Psychology and the University of Maine School of Law (though I have never practiced law). I chose to get a graduate degree because I never wanted to worry about being able to provide for myself. But last March, I received notice that my position with TD Bank was being eliminated. This happened at a time when I was already going through a divorce.

My unemployment benefits ran out on January 4, 2014. I had already cashed in my meager 401(k) this fall when I was unable to pay my bills on unemployment alone. I have applied for job after job after job (not just in Maine), I have networked and I have prayed. In my time out of work, I have had only two job interviews, both of which were informational in nature.

I am writing in hopes that you can understand (and help others understand) that those of us who have been unemployed for long periods of time are not happy to be in this place. I would give anything to be working again . . . to have a sense of purpose given back to me. I am motivated, educated and trying to do everything I can to find a job and having the Emergency Unemployment Benefits cut off has been devastating. My boys have watched me go through days where all I can do is cry. The devastation of this loss of benefits is not easily captured in words alone.

I pray that you and your colleagues can come to a resolution that will allow for the extension of the Emergency Unemployment benefits. And I pray that everyone can come to understand that we are not lazy and not unmotivated! We are doing the very best we can in a job market that is less than thriving.

My sincere gratitude for your time and for listening.

Warmly,

Suzanne  
Scarborough, ME

December 19, 2013

Dear Senator King,

I just read on NBCnews.com that a budget agreement has been put forth, but that an extension of unemployment benefits was not part of that agreement, though it could be a separate agreement later in the week. My concern is that for the first time in my life, I have been hit with an extended period of unemployment. The state's and company's contributions have come to an end, and I am told that the end of my benefits will be for the week ending 12/28 unless Congress approves an extension to the emergency unemployment benefits.

Senator, I want to put a personal face on this issue for you. I was let go from my non-profit Human Resources job in Portland in May. I have searched for work in the same field and in similar fields, to no avail. I am looking in other states now. I believe it may be because I do not have a degree, and as a result, have returned to school (online) to get my degree. I am also a veteran of the United States Navy, and as a result of my situation, was able to get approved for the VRAP program, and am also enrolled in Barber school in New Hampshire to train me for a new career in the event I still cannot get a job in Human Resources. Barber school is Monday through Friday, 9-4, and runs until May. Benefits for VRAP expire at the end of March, which still leave me with a balance to pay out of my own pocket.

I am barely surviving on my unemployment benefits now. Each week, I am left with less than \$10 with which to buy groceries or pay the VA for my medication. I cannot work unless it is for more money than what I make on unemployment, because to do so would mean bankruptcy, as my unemployment benefits would stop altogether, regardless of what I make at the new job. I have one child to support as well. I am asking you, Senator King, to please do what you can to bring a vote about on the unemployment extension, and to please support it. I know I am not the only Mainer affected by this issue, which needs to be settled this week before the House of Representatives goes on break.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Peter  
Cumberland Ctr., ME

December 11, 2013

My name is Jean. I am a single, woman, age 60, homeowner, (for the moment) who has worked the last 45 years of my life. Two years ago, the employment and position I had for nearly 13 years was "eliminated" due to "downsizing". The loss of my work threw my life into complete chaos as I was barely making it as it was but at least I had earned some vacation, some sick leave, health insurance and had a 401K. Note, I said "HAD".

Since losing my job I've taken two temporary jobs, 3 months and 2 months respectively....other than that I have been unable to obtain work. My home mortgage has been on an unemployment forbearance program due to run out this month. I applied for heating oil assistance in September, and met with LiHeap in Oct. I was told at that time that it would be the end of December or January before I would even find out if I qualified...and once I get that information, it could be another 6 to 8 weeks before I receive a delivery.

My sole source of income right now is unemployment at \$366 per week. I owe state and federal taxes from last year and will again. I live alone. I have no children. And, I've used my entire retirement account to try to hold onto my home and sustain myself. I have no health insurance. I struggle to just get the two prescriptions I take and thank God everyday that I am reasonably healthy. I get no other assistance except from the grace of my friends that try to send me \$50.00 for groceries or gas money every now and then.

If this emergency extension is not dealt with...I will be completely without resources, and will be completely broke and homeless. That is the absolute truth. So, the purpose of my note is to please do whatever is necessary to ensure that I (and all in my position) can hold on at least a little longer to our homes, our ability to buy food, get a little heat and take care of ourselves during what is shaping up to be a "true Maine winter".

In closing, I worked 45 years of my life, bought my modest little home (which by the way has been for sale for 2 1/2 years at \$124,000. and still hasn't sold, even though all showing come back with wonderful feedback) only to be 60 years old and apparently "unemployable"...at least in a manner that would sustain me as a single HH, homeowner...I beg you to use whatever influence or vote you have to protect the people like myself in the State of Maine....

Thank you.

Jean  
Naples, Maine