

### **Legislative leaders demand that Sanford request federal loan**

The leadership of the S. C. General Assembly today called upon Gov. Mark Sanford to immediately request a federal loan to provide unemployment compensation to more than 70,000 jobless South Carolinians. Without the loan, unemployment compensation will cease by year's end.

"We have an 8.4 percent unemployment rate, one of the highest in the nation," said House Speaker Bobby Harrell. "It is inconceivable that Governor Sanford hasn't already made this request of the federal government, and it would be tragic if he allows jobless benefits to run out, particularly at this time of year. Make no mistake, this is totally his decision. He can't try to blame this on others like he usually does."

Sanford has demanded changes in the Employment Security Commission before he requests the loan.

Officials at the commission say South Carolina has about two weeks of funding left in the state's unemployment trust fund. Without the federal loan, the state will not have benefits to pay by the first of the year.

"What we need to understand is this is not a bailout. I agree with the Governor that bank and corporate bailouts are bad for taxpayers and the free market system. This instead is money to provide for South Carolinians who lost their jobs through no fault of their own and are victims of the bad practices on Wall Street and in Detroit the Governor has repeatedly attacked. We do not need to provide a golden parachute for Wall Street executives but rather provide a safety net for those fighting to get through these tough times. If the Governor wants reforms now, he should work with the General Assembly to show the deficiencies at the ESC and recommend fixes. He has had six years to scrutinize the ESC and make changes," said Sen. Glenn McConnell, Senate President Pro Tem. "Yet, he picks Christmas season in the worst economic year since the Great Depression to launch a grandstanding assault on the commission. Every family relying upon unemployment benefits to pay the bills must be worried out of their minds. There is a right way and a wrong way to do things and this is unquestionably the wrong way at the worst time. Reforms may be necessary at the ESC and we must strive to make sure that we improve the ESC, but we cannot let the people who need the ESC to provide for their families in tough times to be used as pawns in a public relations campaign."

"I've been in the Senate 28 years. Never have I seen a more heartless and cruel act by a governor," said Senate Finance Committee Chairman Hugh Leatherman. "I call upon him to end this reign of emotional trauma and request the loans. He cannot undo the damage he has already done, but he can let working families, who are without a job, know they'll at least have enough money to feed their family after January 1."

All three legislative leaders said if Sanford wants to seek reform of the ESC, the legislative session begins in January and he can propose legislation at that time.

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