

HURDLE AVOIDED IN SENATE FOR EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS



A hurdle in the Senate had been passed on Tuesday for the three-month extension of unemployment benefits that totals \$6.4 billion, according to CNN. Not long after this news was made public, President Barack Obama said that nothing had been passed yet. "All they've agreed to, so far, is that we're actually going to be able to have a vote on it," Obama said from the White House. "We have got to get this across the finish line without obstruction or delay."

Some 60 senators, six of them Republicans, voted to go ahead with the measure in a debate forum.

"Today brought us a glimmer of hope," said Sen. Charles Schumer, D-New York. "It shows that the big plates -- the tectonic plates in our politics -- are moving."

John Boehner, the House Speaker, reiterated today that he told Obama last month that extending the benefits "should not only be paid for but include something to help put people back to work. To date, the president has offered no such plan. If he does, I'll be happy to discuss it, but right now the House is going to remain focused on growing the economy and giving America's unemployed the independence that only comes from finding a good job."

The vote today needed 60-yea votes in order to move the measure to debate and avoid a filibuster in the Senate. The Republicans who voted yea include Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire; Dan Coats of Indiana; Susan Collins of Maine; Dean Heller of Nevada, Lisa Murkowski of Arkansas; and Rob Portman of Ohio.

Obama appealed to Congress to extend the benefits in order to help those who are still having trouble finding a job.

"These are your neighbors, your friends, your family members," Obama said. "When times get tough, we are not a people who say, 'You're on your own.' We are people who believe we're all in it together, and we know, there but for the grace of God go I."

Most Republicans claim that the unemployment benefit extension would hurt, not help, the economy. The reason for this is that they feel it would be a disincentive to create jobs. Senator Mark Kirk, from Illinois, said that he wants Congress to find a way to pay for the measure because he wants to help people.

"I, obviously, have people in my state who would benefit. The better way to go is to not add to the deficit in an irresponsible way," Kirk said.

"I want us to get on the bill so we can talk about an offset to pay for it," Collins said. "Ultimately, I think we should restructure the unemployment compensation program so it's more closely linked to job training for the long-term unemployed whose jobs probably are not coming back."