

UNEMPLOYED IN SOUTH CAROLINA THE FOCUS OF SEVERAL BILLS



In South Carolina, there are some huge changes that are expected to occur when it comes to the unemployed individuals in the area and how they are able to receive unemployment, along with what they will need to do to receive their unemployment checks. As of right now, a few bills are on their way to the State House and some of these bills would actually eliminate the availability of unemployment benefits to specific workers who were fired, not laid off, from their jobs. Some bills that are being sent to the State House are asking that unemployed individuals pass drug tests as a means of receiving their unemployment check. People who support and are in favor of the bills believe that these bills will be helping out a number of business by reducing the taxes they have to pay while also making sure that unemployed individuals who were laid off receive their benefits while those who have been fired do not. A Senate bill is underway which would require unemployed individuals to pass a drug test prior to being eligible for an unemployment check. A few other bills will include the denying of benefits to workers who were only par-time and workers who were fired from their place of work, due to a fault of their own. A House bill is also under consideration from the committee. This bill would allow the companies to let the state know when a potential employee fails a drug test which would then result in the loss of the unemployment benefits. The director of the S.C. Appleseed Legal Justice Center, has said, "I keep thinking the victims of this economy are the people who have lost their jobs and are struggling." She also says, "Now, they find themselves the target, as if they've chosen to be unemployed. It's very disconcerting. We're so worried about the employers that we forget about the people." In South Carolina, nearly 200,000 individuals are currently unemployed. Right now, the average individual who has been laid off receives about \$236 each week. The economy of South Carolina is beginning to improve but the unemployment rate is still high, at 9.5 percent, which is higher than the national average. Not only are unemployed individuals feeling the crunch of the messy economy, many businesses are feeling the wrath as well. The United States Department of Labor has estimated that the state has paid about \$86 million worth of unemployment benefits to individuals who defrauded the system and lied as a way of receiving the benefits. The state also ended up paying off about \$50 million worth of benefits to individuals who were fired from their job, due to their own fault, and were not laid off.

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