



## Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development Office of Domestic Social Development

### UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOBS February 2011

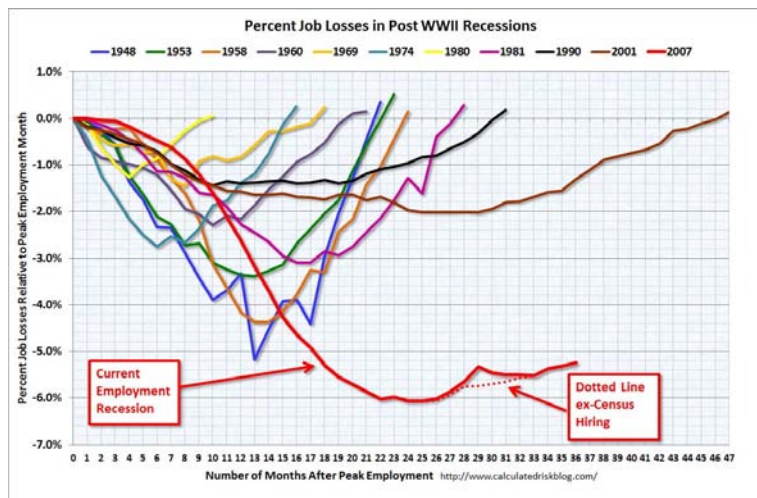
#### ISSUE

Despite the fact that the recession has officially ended, misery and hardship persist for millions of our brothers and sisters who cannot find work and cannot support their families.

On February 4, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 13.9 million Americans remain unemployed. The unemployment rate stands at 9%; however this understates the real joblessness in our communities. In addition to the total unemployed, 2.8 million people are marginally attached, meaning they have stopped looking, and another 8.4 million are involuntarily working part-time. A staggering 45% of the total amount of unemployed workers has been without work for over six months. The average length of unemployment is nine months.

As Congress completed its business last year, it extended unemployment insurance through 2011. USCCB, Catholic Charities USA, and other organizations committed to protecting vulnerable families fought hard to ensure that unemployment insurance passed. Many economists and workforce policy analysts fear, however, that this is the last unemployment insurance extension Congress will pass, despite the fact that unemployment shows no sign of abating, and job creation is painfully slow.

It is difficult to understate the breadth and depth of the employment crisis facing our country. This graph illustrates the job loss relative to the beginning of the recession, and measures it against past recessions.



The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities notes that if the country tripled the current rate of job growth, it would still take five more years to get back to pre-recession employment levels.

More disheartening is the magnitude of the crisis among those who are on the lower end of the economic ladder. The Center for Labor Studies at Northeastern University reported last year that while the

unemployment rate for the wealthiest 10% of the labor force is about 1.6%, for the poorest 10% of the labor force unemployment is an astounding 31%.

One in every four unemployed workers is younger than 25. Although 16-24 year olds constitute 13.5% of the labor force, they are over 25% of the unemployed. Recent research demonstrates that workers who enter the labor force during a recession earn considerably less over the course of their lifetimes. Additionally, unemployment among Black workers (15.7%) and Hispanic workers (11.9%) is considerably higher than the national rate.

## **USCCB POSITION**

In successfully advocating a year-long extension of emergency unemployment benefits, Bishop Stephen E. Blaire, Chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted that “the most effective antipoverty policy is decent work at decent wages; however in such an extraordinary economic circumstance, Congress has a moral obligation to protect the life and dignity of unemployed workers and their families,” and also pointed out that Pope John Paul II called pervasive unemployment a “social disaster.”

In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI points out: “unemployment today provokes new forms of economic marginalization, and the current crisis can only make this situation worse. Being out of work or dependent on public or private assistance for a prolonged period undermines the freedom and creativity of the person and his family and social relationships, causing great psychological and spiritual suffering.”

The bishops of the United States seek to call attention to the personal, family, and community suffering caused by persistent unemployment, and will continue to advocate policies that will create decent jobs that allow workers to provide a basic standard of living for themselves and their families.

## **ACTION**

- Educate your Senators and Representative on the severity of the jobs crisis, and ask them to support legislation that will create jobs with decent wages for low-income individuals and families.
- Sign up for Action Alerts at <http://capwiz.com/catholicbishops/mlm/signup/> (be sure to check “Domestic Social Policy”) and <http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1267>
- Encourage your diocese and parishes to join the *Faith Advocates for Jobs* campaign.

## **RESOURCES**

- USCCB Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/)
- Catholic Charities USA: [www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/](http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/)
- *Caritas in Veritate*: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html)

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