

More than 202,600 Pennsylvanians could qualify for an additional 13 weeks

(Washington, D.C.) -- After the U.S. Department of Labor's announcement last week that America's unemployment rate has risen to 5.5 percent, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today voted for legislation that will provide 3.8 million workers -- including more than 202,600 Pennsylvanians -- with an additional 13 weeks of unemployment insurance. The Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act (H.R. 5749) temporarily authorizes 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits and will be paid for out of the federal unemployment trust fund, which has \$35 billion in reserve. The bill passed today by a vote of 224-137.

“Millions of unemployed Americans are facing a perfect storm of rising food and gas prices and fewer job openings,” Altmire said. **“Extending unemployment insurance is essential to ensuring thousands of Pennsylvanians can survive financially as they continue looking for work. Independent experts agree that it is also one of the fastest, most cost-effective actions Congress can take to increase consumer spending and provide a much-needed boost to the economy.”**

The jump in the unemployment rate this May from 5 percent to 5.5 percent was the biggest one-month increase in two decades. Nearly one in five (1.6 million) unemployed workers have been jobless for more than 26 weeks, the maximum amount of time currently covered by regular unemployment benefits.

President Bush has threatened to veto this legislation, even though there are now 200,000 more Americans who have been jobless for over six months than there were in 2002 when the president last agreed to extend unemployment benefits.