

For Immediate Release

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Record Oregon Unemployment Numbers Underscore Need to Modernize Unemployment Insurance System

Statement by OCPP policy analyst Joy Margheim

Oregon job losses in February by far exceeded those of any month since the recession began and pushed our total job loss to 85,700 since December 2007.

Today's news adds 21,700 more reasons why the Oregon Legislative Assembly needs to enact a package of bills that modernize the state's unemployment insurance (UI) system.

Analysis of the Employment Department's report shows that the "employment services" sector, which includes temporary agency jobs, has been particularly hit hard this recession. The decline in February puts that sector's job losses at 28.7 percent since a year ago.

Temporary workers often face difficulties qualifying for UI benefits, due to eligibility rules that penalize part-time workers and that disregard up to six months of the most recent work experience when calculating minimum hour and income requirements.

The legislature should heed today's news by moving forward on a package of bills that help part-time and low-wage workers: SB 461, which allows unemployed workers to receive job training; SB 462, which would create an alternative base period; SB 463, which would allow part-time workers to collect unemployment insurance; HB 3045, which would provide unemployed workers with a dependent allowance; and HB 3140, which would end the one-week waiting period to receive unemployment insurance.

Unemployment insurance is good for workers, businesses and employers. Making it work better should be one of the highest priorities for our legislative leaders in light of today's news.

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