

As unemployment benefits have begun to expire for many out-of-work Americans, Rep. Peter Welch introduced legislation this week to extend unemployment benefits in most states for an additional 13 weeks.

Welch's bill, the Unemployment Compensation Extension Act (H.R. 3756), would apply to states with unemployment rates above 6.5 percent. According to the Vermont Department of Labor, Vermont's three-month average, seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate is seven percent.

The House passed legislation earlier this month that extended benefits only for the 27 states with unemployment rates above 8.5 percent. The Senate is considering compromise legislation that would extend benefits to all states for 14 weeks – with an additional six weeks for states with unemployment rates above 8.5 percent.

“Unemployment knows no state boundaries. No matter where you live, if you are unemployed you are struggling to get by,” Welch said. “We must act now to help the millions of unemployed Americans who are losing this critical lifeline. Failing to act now will hurt not only the most vulnerable, jobless Americans, but the economy as a whole.”

Welch's bill was co-sponsored by Reps. Tom Perriello (D-Va.), David Loebsack (D-Iowa) and Paul Hodes (D-N.H.).