

318 2nd Ave. N • Mount Vernon, IA 52314

www.iowapolicyproject.org

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CONTACT: Mike Owen (319) 643-3628 or ipp@lcom.net

EDITORS: This accompanies our release about the November employment report.

Double Whammy: On Heels of Poor Job Report, Jobless Benefits to Vanish

MOUNT VERNON, Iowa (Dec. 18, 2003) – Just in time for the holidays, some Iowa families are taking a double blow: poor prospects for a job, and a loss of unemployment benefits.

A federal program that provides 13 weeks of unemployment assistance for long-term unemployed is about to expire. The program, for people who have exhausted their state benefits, has been extended twice since being enacted in March 2002.

According to the National Employment Law Project (NELP), more than 60,000 Iowans had received benefits from the Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation program through October 2003, pumping more than \$127.5 million into Iowa households and the economy.

Congress chose not to reauthorize the program for 2004, and it will terminate on Sunday. As a result, NELP estimates more than 2 million workers nationally and 17,282 workers in Iowa will lose benefits during the first six months of 2004.

“It’s worth noting that the unemployment rate in the U.S. and Iowa are higher than when Congress started the program,” said Peter Fisher, research director for the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project. “Even if Congress decides in January that it will extend benefits, that’s a month too late for many thousands of people.”