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More unemployment benefits available thru stimulus funding

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Labor (DOL) is providing an additional \$25 in weekly benefit payments to unemployment insurance claimants.

“The \$25 is being added to the regular unemployment benefit. Payments started on March 2,” said Labor Secretary Pam Roberts.

The extra money is a result of funding provided to South Dakota through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which was signed Feb. 17 by President Obama. The additional payments can continue through June 30, 2010, for workers who start claims on or before Dec. 31, 2009.

The 20-week federal extension of benefits continues for workers who have exhausted their regular state benefit entitlements. “The stimulus package moves the expiration date of these benefits from March 31, 2009, to Dec. 31, 2009,” said Secretary Roberts. “In addition, the Unemployment Insurance program will receive \$1.2 million in administrative funding for staffing to handle the heavy claims volume and improve systems to receive and process claims.”

DOL will receive approximately \$4.1 million for workforce training programs for adults and youth through the stimulus package. Job training and services will be provided to those seeking work. “The priority will be to low-income individuals,” said Secretary Roberts. “Strong emphasis will also be placed on summer employment for youth.”

DOL will receive approximately \$1 million for dislocated workers. “The focus will include re-employment and re-training services for permanently laid-off workers,” said Secretary Roberts.

Additional dislocated worker funds can be applied for when formula funds are exhausted.

Over \$2.7 million will be provided for employment and re-employment services. “State government has been in a hiring freeze, but these monies will allow DOL to fill vacant positions,” said Secretary Roberts. “These positions will be for job placement and unemployment insurance case-management staff.”

Additional benefits from the stimulus package include:

- Federal tax credits for employers through the Work Opportunity and Tax Credit program will be extended to new hires who are unemployed veterans and disconnected youth.
- Trade Adjustment Assistance eligible worker dislocations will be expanded to include outsourcing, trade-affected communities, import surges and unfair trade.
- \$164,588 will be subcontracted to Experience Works, a community service development program for older Americans.
- A 65% subsidy for COBRA continuation premiums for up to nine months will be given to workers who have been involuntarily terminated and those workers' families.
- The first \$2,400 in unemployment compensation benefits paid in 2009 will be exempt from federal income tax.

The goal of DOL is enhance the South Dakota workforce by providing businesses with employment-related solutions and helping people with job placement and career transition services. More information on programs and services is available at www.sdjobs.org.