



## DC Is Doing a Lot to Help Unemployed Workers, But New Report Suggests Even More Can Be Done

By Ilana Boivie

The District helps unemployed workers in a number of important ways, including recent reforms to improve the city's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. But there are still creative ways DC can further assist the unemployed, especially extending UI benefits to workers who are forced to leave their jobs due to domestic violence or other personal traumas. Recommendations for DC and the states were highlighted in a report released last week by several national organizations.

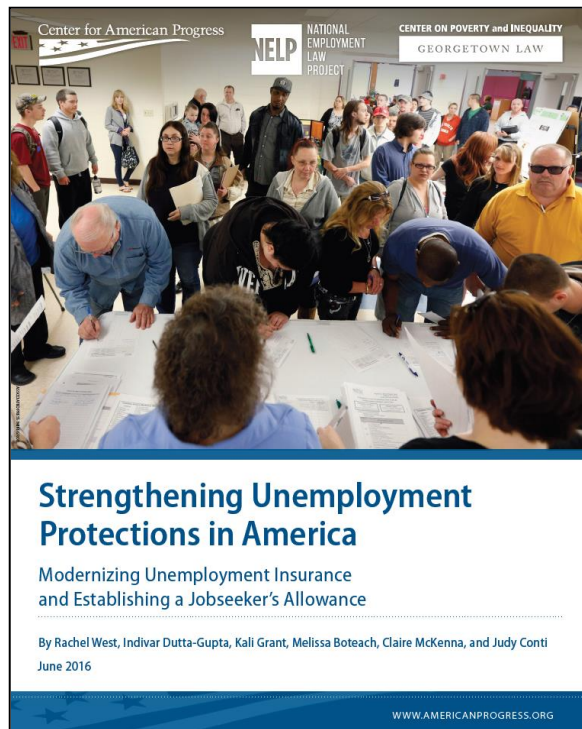
The following reforms to DC's UI program were part of the Fiscal Year 2017 budget:

1. Raising the maximum weekly UI benefit amount to \$425, the first increase in a decade;
2. Helping workers retain part-time employment to supplement their UI benefits;
3. Ensuring that all workers can get UI benefits for 26 weeks if needed; and
4. Authorizing the Department of Employment Services (DOES) to adjust unemployment benefits each year for inflation.

Thanks to these changes, the District now incorporates six out of seven recommendations from a new [report](#) on strengthening UI from the Center for American Progress, the National Employment Law Project, and the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality.

One recommendation that DC does not currently follow would be to allow workers to get help from UI when they leave work due to unreasonable scheduling practices or for compelling personal reasons, such as escaping domestic violence or caring for a sick family member. Instead, DC workers can only get benefits if they lose a job "through no fault of their own," such as being laid off.

The report also recommends several new policies to better serve unemployed workers across the country. First, in order to help unemployed residents find quality work, the report recommends increasing and improving re-employment services, and providing additional technical assistance to workers who must "reskill" in order to find a job in a new career or industry. Second, the report proposes a "Jobseekers Allowance," a small, short-term weekly benefit that would be available to all



jobseekers—whether or not they qualify for UI—in order to support their job search activities. (In the District, only 32 percent of all jobseekers actually qualify for unemployment.)

While DC’s unemployment program clearly serves its workers well—and will be even more robust thanks to the new legislation—this new report highlights the fact that more can be done to better ensure that city workers are able to make ends meet when they face unemployment.