

Jobless Voters Set to Play Key Role in Midterm Races

Midterm elections are usually a time for most voters to catch a nap between presidential races and for hard-core Republican and Democratic supporters to decide the outcome.

The 2010 midterm elections, however, won't follow the normal pattern as the crosscurrents of Tea Party deficit zealots and the anger of 31 million unemployed and underemployed Americans who want JOBS Now! roil the political landscape.

Those competing currents

retired Democratic Senator Arlen Specter in Pennsylvania, replaced GOP incumbents with Tea Party favorites in several primary races and landed an unemployed veteran as the Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate in South Carolina.

What's at Stake

Up for grabs this election cycle are all the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 36 Senate seats and 37 governors' mansions. Democrats took control of Congress in 2006 and then solidified their

majorities in the House and Senate in 2008. Although the Democratic Congress has made significant gains in helping America's working families, momentum is shifting against them. In the name of deficit reduction, Republicans and conservative Democrats are blocking efforts to create jobs.

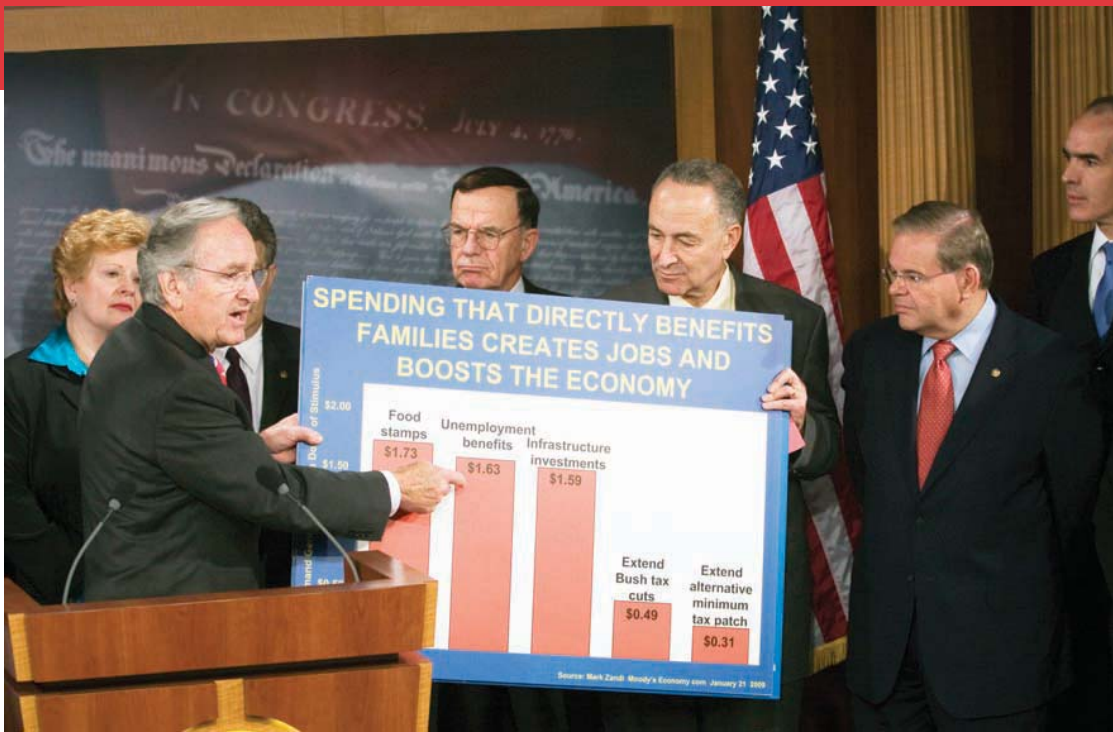
Cutting back on income support programs like unemployment insurance, food stamps and COBRA subsidies and failing to fund money for cash-strapped states is the wrong move for an economy struggling to recover from the brink of a depression. Even one of Senator John McCain's former economic advisors, Mark Zandi of Moody's Economy.com, gets it.

"Increased income support has been a part of the federal response to most recessions, and for good reason: It is the most efficient way to prime the economy's pump," says Zandi. "Simulations ... show that every dollar spent on unemployment insurance benefits generates an estimated \$1.63 in near term Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Boosting food stamp payments by \$1 increases GDP by \$1.73." The increase in GDP translates into more jobs as people spend the income.



AP/Wide World Photo

There are still more than five job seekers for every job opening, such as at this job fair in Los Angeles. Without aggressive federal programs to spur job creation and help for America's long-term unemployed, American families could suffer for years into the future.



Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) points to economic studies that show federal spending on unemployment insurance, food stamps and infrastructure projects are the most effective ways to stimulate the economy.

Going Backwards

But economic stimulus opponents are moving Congress in the wrong direction. As the *IAM Journal* went to press, the conservative deficit hawks were holding up attempts to extend unemployment benefits to the end of the year, blocking \$24 billion in state aid to keep local teachers, firefighters and police on the job and ending the subsidy to help laid-off workers continue their medical coverage under COBRA.

“Instead of throwing a life-line to unemployed families who are sinking into poverty, conservative members of Congress tied an anchor around

More than 31 million Americans are either unemployed or underemployed and the number of Americans suffering long-term unemployment is reaching levels rivaling the Great Depression.

their feet in the name of deficit reduction,” said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger. “They are ignoring hard lessons from the Great Depression. After massive federal spending on jobs programs had significantly cut the unemployment rate from its high of almost 25 percent, that era’s deficit hawks forced President Roosevelt to cut federal



spending in 1937. The recovery faltered, and unemployment was back up to 19 percent by 1938.”

UCubed Voters

Even though the Tea Party movement has grabbed media attention, the nation’s unemployed are becoming a vocal political force. In early 2010, the IAM

launched “Ur Union of Unemployed,” or UCubed, as a way to bring together America’s unemployed to share resources and focus their efforts on creating jobs.

UCubed jobs activists have sent more than 27,000 messages to legislators at the state and federal level urging them to take action to create JOBS Now! A UCubed advertisement, “Our Turn,” ran in Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Increased voter turnout stirred the politics of both states.

“In low-turnout election years, motivated voters can make the difference in close races,” said UCubed Acting Executive Director Rick Sloan. “UCubed members are motivated because they need a job now. They are at the end of their economic rope. America’s unemployed will go vote for candidates who will create jobs and retire those who won’t.”

For information on UCubed, go to unionofunemployed.com.