

Congressman Jim Renacci
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In my earlier years, I never thought about running for Congress. However, as time went on and I became a father of three, I grew more and more concerned about the direction our country was moving. I strongly believed that we must change course. In 2010, the good people of Northeast Ohio elected me to represent them in Washington, and I thank them for the opportunity to change business as usual.

Since taking office, I have sought to work with both Republicans and Democrats alike to help advance the pro-growth policies we need to get America's economy moving again and to revive faith in the idea of the American Dream – if you work hard, you can be successful. As the first member of my family to graduate from college, I personally identify with this sentiment. This is why I firmly believe that we must place progress over politics and work together to end the job-crushing policies that have consumed Washington and choke progress toward economic recovery. I am honored to serve on the Ways and Means Committee with my colleagues in this room today. We continue to work to implement smart policies aimed at stabilizing our entitlement programs and simplifying our federal tax system, among other things.

The focus of this hearing is finding ways to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in the UI and SSI systems, and I applaud my colleagues who are testifying with me on their efforts to improve program integrity.

Over the last several years, we have been discouraged by some of the worst jobs reports we have seen in recent times. Though the unemployment rate has ticked down, it was largely due to our shrinking labor force. The lesson learned is clear – we must turn to pro-growth solutions that will help Northeast Ohioans and Americans across the country get back to work.

That is why I introduced the Flexibility to Promote Reemployment Act with my friend John Carney from Delaware, the co-founder of our Bipartisan Working Group. This bipartisan bill would encourage job creation by providing states with more flexibility to help unemployed individuals collect paychecks instead of benefit checks.

Under the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, the Department of Labor was granted waiver authority within the unemployment insurance program. The waivers allowed unprecedented flexibility in the use of state UI funds, enabling states to operate demonstration projects designed to assist the unemployed in their efforts to re-enter the workforce. To date, Texas is the only state that has applied for a waiver and its application was swiftly denied. Many states have described the rigorous application process created by the DOL as onerous and time consuming.

At a time when too many continue to struggle with unemployment, we should be doing everything we can to help incite growth and investment in our local communities. It is time for DOL to go back to the drawing board and reassess its application requirements.

The Flexibility to Promote Reemployment Act would require the DOL to do just that, benefiting both employers and employees. It would implement a series of reforms to the current waiver in an attempt to make it more appealing to states, increasing states' flexibility to help unemployed individuals find employment. Among the reforms in the Flexibility to Promote Reemployment Act, this bill would clarify application requirements and demonstration activities, allow for greater transparency in the demonstration termination process, and require an evaluation from the DOL with cooperation by the States. Additionally, this legislation furthers extends the deadline for waiver applications to 2019.

It is critical that we reduce the unnecessary Washington red tape that continues to stand in the way of job growth in Ohio's 16th district and throughout the country. A good place to start is by working with states to make unemployment programs more effective for both job seekers and job creators. Encouraging job creation is not a partisan issue, Democrats and Republicans alike agree we must advance policies that will fuel the economic recovery we so desperately need. I fully expect that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support the Flexibility to Promote Reemployment Act, and I look forward to seeing this bipartisan, commonsense legislation swiftly move through the legislative process.