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# **SOME KATRINA VICTIMS GET A BREAK ON UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS**

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Ranking Member Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., Friday hailed a Labor Department decision to extend unemployment benefits to Katrina victims who quit temporary jobs in order to return home and rebuild their lives.

In a March 9, 2006, letter to Department of Labor Secretary Elaine Chou, Lieberman asked the Department to review its policies denying disaster unemployment assistance to anyone who had accepted an interim job before deciding to return home. Lieberman argued the federal government should make every effort to help the four in 10 families displaced by the hurricane that want to return home and the one in four people who already have returned home. The Labor Department informed Senator Lieberman Friday that it reviewed its policy and decided to extend benefits to those people.

“The Labor Department’s decision will help thousands of families get back on their feet back in their own communities,” Lieberman said. “We should not penalize those who had, to their great credit, found intervening work in other states despite losing everything they had due to Hurricane Katrina. They should be given the chance to return home and rebuild their lives without penalty, and this decision will accomplish that.”

Earlier this year, Lieberman was successful in passing legislation to extend unemployment benefits for Hurricane Katrina and Rita victims. He is currently supporting efforts to provide a further extension for unemployed hurricane victims of an additional 13 weeks of benefits – thus far this effort has stalled when Republicans objected. A total of 83,514 families will be affected.

More than nine months have passed since Hurricane Katrina's landfall, but Gulf Coast families continue to struggle to find permanent housing and jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has recently reported that 25 percent of displaced Hurricane Katrina victims who have been living out-of-state remained unemployed in May, more than five times the national average. There are 200,000 fewer jobs in Louisiana than there were before landfall.

Lieberman's original letter to Secretary Chou can be read here:

<http://lieberman.senate.gov/documents/letters/060425chaodualetter.pdf>