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STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS ON CONSIDERATION OF THE LEWIS
(GA)-DAVIS (IL)-MOORE (WI)-LEE (CA) AMENDMENT TO H.R. 3630, THE
MIDDLE CLASS TAX RELIEF AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2011

DECEMBER 12, 2011

Good Afternoon, Chairman Dreier, Ranking Member Slaughter, and Members of the Committee. I rise to offer a very simple amendment to H.R. 3630, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2011. I would like to thank Reps. Danny Davis, Gwen Moore, and Barbara Lee for joining me as cosponsors.

This amendment would strike all of Subtitle B in H.R. 3630 -- with the exception of the clean extension of the federal railroad unemployment insurance text -- and replace it with a clean, one-year extension of unemployment benefits.

This one-year unemployment extension fulfills the exact same promises to Main Street as the actions Congress took to help Wall Street. At a time when Congress is wrapping up consideration of our responsibilities for the year in preparation for the holiday break, this amendment takes the politics out of policy. It tells our constituents who have been beating the pavement frantically applying and searching for jobs that we care and that we understand their pain and suffering.

This amendment clarifies that there will be no disruption of unemployment programs after the holidays. Americans who lost their jobs through no fault of their own will be able to scrape by and benefit from the programs to which they contributed for years. As we all know, an unemployment check is not enough to live on, but it might be just enough to keep the lights on, a home warm, and a roof over your head.

Furthermore, my amendment is fiscally responsible. It reminds Congress that by ending the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we will have enough money to offset the cost of these benefits which serve Americans in dire need of just a little bit of hope, a little bit of help.

I am also proud to join Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI) in cosponsoring an amendment to strike unnecessary language in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) section of this bill.

I fully understand the intent of Sec. 2304 in Subtitle D of this Act. No one wants taxpayer dollars being used in questionable locations. Unfortunately, the text as proposed does not offer any options for those who reside in communities where these types of businesses may be the closest retail establishment which cash checks or offer ATM machine services.

The policy must be practical; Congress cannot overreact due to a few bad apples. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is currently conducting an audit of ten states regarding this important issue. We should wait until their report is finalized before making brash decisions. There must be a way to develop logical solutions which address the authors' concerns without penalizing the masses. I hope that everyone will come back to the drawing table to develop a more balanced approach.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns. I hope you all will support these common-sense amendments.