

DESQ *News Release*

OKLAHOMA EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION

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PRESIDENT SIGNS BILL TO EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE Legislation Gives Oklahomans a Hand Up in Facing Slow Economy

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK – Oklahomans who have exhausted their unemployment benefits received some help Wednesday, January 8, 2003, when President Bush signed legislation extending the eligibility period for the federal Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation (TEUC) program which expired on December 28, 2002. This extension means that Oklahomans who have received less than their full share of TEUC benefits because of the expiration may now continue to receive assistance up to a maximum of 13 weeks. In addition, those who have exhausted their entitlement of regular unemployment benefits are now potentially eligible for the TEUC extension. The legislation does not provide any additional benefits to those who have exhausted all of their TEUC eligibility.

“The President signing this federal extension allows those who were on TEUC to continue to draw until those benefits are exhausted,” said Oklahoma Employment Security Commission Director of Unemployment Insurance Sue Havens. “Although the program expired, we have encouraged people to continue to file their weekly unemployment claims. Those claims affected by the program expiration should all be processed by this coming weekend.” Individuals who filed regular unemployment claims or exhausted regular benefits after the TEUC program expired were sent applications to continue benefits when new funding for the program was approved. Those applications are being processed right now.

The \$7.2 billion bill will affect approximately 8,500 Oklahomans who were on the extension or exhausted

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benefits after the federal program expired. It is estimated that an additional 1.6 million people nationwide will become eligible by the program's expiration on May 31, 2003. Those enrolled by the May deadline could receive benefits up to a maximum of 13 weeks or until August 31, 2003, whichever comes first.

The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission strives to be the foundation in building a world-class workforce system in Oklahoma by offering the highest quality services from a friendly, knowledgeable staff and user-friendly technology. Through this effort, the OESC acts as a source of hope and economic stability for the people of Oklahoma.

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