

## Igniting Change - Ms. Foundation Blog Posting

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### Ms. Foundation Grantee Speaks Out on Failure of TANF Extension

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We've written a number of times on this blog about the **importance of TANF** (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and the **critical need** for the Senate to pass an extension to the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, which allocated federal funds to create temporary jobs during the economic crisis. We're sad to report that last week, **the Senate failed** to pass the measure, falling just three votes short of the 60 needed to extend these benefits.

As a result, more than 200,000 individuals who benefited from jobs created by the program will now likely find themselves unemployed. The fund, which was established as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (**ARRA**), offered subsidies to employers that allowed them to hire temporary employees and created thousands of jobs. It was premised, according to Diana Spatz, director of Ms. Foundation grantee **LIFETIME**, "on the idea that it's cheaper to create jobs directly, by investing in communities from the bottom up, than to pour billions into Wall Street and hope it will trickle down." Now the majority of those jobs will be lost, leaving thousands of already struggling Americans -- many of them single mothers and women of color -- dangerously afloat as the recession continues to take its toll.

In an **article** published this week on Women's eNews, Spatz notes,

The unemployment rate for single mothers--who constitute over 90 percent of parents who receive welfare--has more than doubled since the Great Recession officially began in 2007, reaching its highest level in 25 years.

An astounding 1-in-8 Americans now receive food stamps, a record enrollment for the program.

And recent data from the Census Bureau found that the poverty rate has risen for the third consecutive year, reaching its highest level in 15 years. The gap between rich and poor is now the largest on record. And 1-in-5 American children now live in poverty, with poverty rates in rural areas of our country topping 72 percent for families headed by Latina single mothers and 63 percent for those headed by black single mothers.

Without the emergency jobs program, prospects for unemployed parents will be increasingly grim.

The fact that this was a program that worked -- it created "nearly a quarter million jobs for pennies on the dollar," according to Spatz -- seemed to hold little sway with the many Senators who blocked the bill. Instead, in a time when welfare rolls are already on the rise and the need for jobs more desperate than ever, we find ourselves in a situation where our leaders in Washington are slashing employment opportunities rather than creating them.

Call it a sad day for all Americans.