The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of workers, families, and middle class Americans across the Seventh Congressional District of Alabama and across this entire Nation who have lost their jobs as a result of the deepest economic recession since the Great Depression.

In my district and across the Seventh Congressional District of Alabama and across this Nation, the number one issue is job creation. While some progress has been made in turning our economy around, there is still so much work to be done in order to encourage job creation. Recent reports indicate that the Nation’s private employers created approximately 200,000 new jobs during November. While this number shows that our economy is slowly recovering and growing, we cannot forget about the millions of Americans who have been diligently searching for work but who have not been successful in doing so.

Congress must extend unemployment benefits for the hardworking Americans who have lost their jobs due to no fault of their own—rather, due to the economic downturn. These workers should also be given the necessary assistance to provide for their families during this difficult time. Nearly one-third of America’s 14 million unemployed have had no jobs for a year or more. In fact, long-term unemployment data suggests that about 2 million people have used up the 99 weeks of unemployment benefits, but they still cannot find work.

Congress has never allowed emergency unemployment programs to expire when the unemployment rate has exceeded 7.2 percent. With our Nation’s unemployment rate hovering around 9 percent, now is not the time to allow these essential benefits to expire.

In my home State of Alabama, unemployment and poverty rates have both increased dramatically in the wake of the most recent recession. In parts of the district that I represent, unemployment and poverty rates have both increased by as high as 19 percent. Now is not the time for work to be done in order to encourage employment and poverty rates to decrease but rather for jobs to be created.

Protecting the jobs of all workers justifies the extension of unemployment benefits. Millions of unemployed Americans would face dire consequences if Congress fails to extend emergency unemployment benefits.

Mr. Speaker, unemployment insurance provides the safety net for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

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