

Dan Inouye

U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII



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HAWAII RECEIVES \$10.2 MILLION IN UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE MODERNIZATION FUNDS

Department of Labor releases funds from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON – Senate Appropriations Chairman Daniel K. Inouye and Senator Daniel K. Akaka confirmed today that Hawaii will receive \$10.2 million in unemployment insurance (UI) modernization funds, which was certified by the U.S. Department of Labor. Hawaii qualified for the funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) by meeting the federal requirements of allowing workers to use their more recent earnings to be eligible for benefits.

The Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations can use the funds to pay unemployment benefits or, if appropriated by the legislature, for administering its unemployment insurance program or delivering employment services.

“As Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, I pushed for this vital stimulus bill which narrowly passed the Senate because I knew the unemployment insurance funding provisions would be critical for hard working Hawaii residents who are struggling, often through no fault of their own, because of this economic downturn affecting the entire country,” said Chairman Inouye.

“More people in Hawaii are unemployed today than any time in the last three decades,” said Senator Akaka, noting the current statewide unemployment rate of 7.1 percent. “By providing additional funding for the state unemployment program as the jobless rate has increased, this grant will help struggling island families make ends meet while our country’s economy recovers.”

This grant is one-third of the funding authorized by ARRA. Because Hawaii Law was already in compliance with the requirements for the first third of the funding, only an application was necessary to qualify.

To qualify for the remaining two-thirds of the funding, the State has the option of providing benefits in at least two of the following four situations: 1) part-time workers who are denied state benefits because they are required to seek full-time work; 2) individuals who leave work for compelling family reasons, including domestic violence; 3) workers with dependent family members who qualify for state benefits but whose benefits should be increased to help care for their dependents; or 4) permanently laid off workers who require extra unemployment benefits to participate in training.

“Hawaii’s UI program includes a key provision that better meets the needs of the 21st century workforce,” said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. “Hawaii uses recent wages when determining eligibility for benefits, which enables unemployed workers who are relatively new entrants to the workforce to receive the assistance they need and deserve.”