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Emergency Unemployment Compensation program. The added benefits were authorized in 2008 and extended 11 times as the recession and its effects dragged on.

Jan. 01, 2014

Jan. 01 — About 1.3 million of the nation's 4 million long-term unemployed no longer are getting unemployment benefits.

That includes more than 3,700 Kansans and more than 22,600 Missourians who have been out of work for at least 27 weeks, the official definition of long-term joblessness.

All extended federal benefits ended last week because the budget deal reached by U.S. Senate and House negotiators didn't include extension of the federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation program. The added benefits were authorized in 2008 and extended 11 times as the recession and its effects dragged on.

Senate Democrats may try to reintroduce the program in January, to provide a three-month extension with retroactive payments, but any attempt is expected to be opposed by Republicans.

An additional 2 million unemployment recipients nationally will exhaust their regular state benefits in the first part of 2014 and have no further access to extended federal benefits.

Regular state jobless benefits have been capped at 26 weeks in Kansas and 20 weeks in Missouri. As of 2014, Kansas also is capping state benefits at 20 weeks.

Because of the recession's length and depth, some long-term recipients of jobless aid had been eligible to receive up to 99 weeks of aid. But three tiers of extended benefits

programs wound down as the economy improved, and the final extensions ceased at

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The decline in unemployment assistance reflects the phaseout of federal benefits and reduction of weeks provided by various states.

Overall, the number of long-term unemployed people has fallen from its recession-era peak of 6.7 million to about 4 million now, representing about one-third of the total unemployed.

According to federal figures, the average weekly unemployment check nationally is about \$300. Checks are based on 60 percent of average weekly earnings.

In Kansas, the maximum check size is \$420 a week for the highest earners. In Missouri, the maximum check size is \$320, also based on earnings.

Those who oppose extending benefits say that the checks keep job hunters from being aggressive in their searches for work. Those who advocate extensions say that the job market remains difficult for some workers and that the checks cover basic expenses for people who have exhausted other resources.

Many economists also say the checks help the economy because the money is spent, and quickly.

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