



News

## BENEFITS BILL BATTLE HITS HOME

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**LYNN** — Heather Mateo of Lynn wiped away tears Friday as she told U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, U.S. Rep. John Tierney and area job assistance executives how she lost her job last May and has been unable to find another.

"I'm looking for anything," the mother of two told Warren and Tierney.

Federal and state labor reports classify job seekers like Mateo as long-term unemployed individuals. Extended unemployment benefits help 55,000 Massachusetts residents fitting this description make ends meet, but a U.S. Senate vote to extend benefits fell short of passing Thursday.

Warren on Friday blamed congressional Republicans for killing the benefits extension.

"We have a group of intransigent Republicans who can see all of this and refuse to act," □ she said.

Mateo said her family has dipped into savings to help pay bills and said her initially optimistic predictions on getting a new job have slipped away in the last several months.

"It's devastating," □ she said. "There's just no figuring it out." □

Job assistance agency directors like David Buck of Cambridge said a number of factors make it hard for the long-term unemployed to get new jobs. Age discrimination and a reluctance on employers' parts to hire someone out of work for longer than six months factor into the equation.

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*Mary Sarris of the North Shore Workforce Investment Board, left, with Congressman John Tierney and Senator Elizabeth Warren during a forum on unemployment benefits at the North Shore Career Center in Lynn on Friday, February 7. (Click to enlarge)*

Buck and fellow Career Source Director Linda Rohrer said benefits are crucial to job hunters because searches for new employment can last months.

"Searches are significantly longer now because of the recession," □ he said.

Tierney said not extending unemployment benefits hurts the economy by denying jobless people any significant spending power.

"For every dollar we put in economists tell us we get the \$1.52," □ he said.

Tierney blamed Republican "obstructionism" □ for the 58-40 Senate vote that fell two votes shy of winning the benefits' bills passage.

His Republican opponent Richard Tisei said benefits extensions are important, but said Congress needs to convene a jobs summit aimed at fixing the economy.

"Pointing fingers is not what people want. They want policies allowing small businesses to begin hiring again," □ Tisei said.

North Shore Community College President Patricia Gentile said the federal government can aid the unemployed by restructuring financial aid to allow students to attend school in the summer as well as the rest of the year.

Gentile also told Tierney and Warren the college faces a space shortage and she is struggling to find room for a culinary arts program that could train and put unemployed students to work.

"I have waiting lists of people who want to get in," □ she said.

Before leaving the career center on Union Street, Tierney asked Mateo to send her resume to his office. Mateo said she appreciates the offer to help and said "not working drives me crazy." □

"I've always worked," □ she said.