

Unemployed Nation Hearings

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Seattle, WA — With the slow recovery from the Great Recession still underway, unemployment in the United States remains at levels not seen for decades. Benefits dwindle; foreclosures loom. Perhaps worst of all, hope runs short. Millions are left feeling unrepresented and voiceless.

New partnership convenes to give voice to “unemployed nation”

Momentum builds for major hearings on unemployment to occur this spring

This spring, an innovative partnership will convene to shed new light on the issue of joblessness. The Unemployed Nation Hearings, a two-day event scheduled for March 30-31, 2012, will air testimony from a wide range of unemployed people about their experiences. Testimony will be supplemented with the expertise of economists, legal and political scholars, and others. The first day will occur at the University of Washington’s Seattle campus, and the second day will be hosted at Seattle City Hall.

“More than 14 million Americans are unemployed,” explains UW History professor James Gregory. “A great many are facing unprecedented long-term unemployment. We are going to do what Congress should have done long ago. We are going to listen to that unemployed nation.”

Gregory chairs the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the UW, a major sponsor of the event. Other sponsors at the UW include the School of Law; the Evans School of Public Affairs; the School of Social Work; the West Coast Poverty Center; and the Law, Societies and Justice Program. The Seattle Mayor’s Office and the Seattle City Council have pledged support for the event, as has the Martin Luther King, Jr. County Labor Council.

“This partnership represents an opportunity for a wide range of organizations, across campus and in the community, to come together to address a pressing social issue,” says Robert Plotnick, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for the Evans School.

Event organizers recently launched UnemployedNation.Org , a website featuring up-to-date

information on unemployment including news, special reports, and editorials. The site will serve as a hub for new information on the Unemployed Nation Hearings as it becomes available.

Additionally, the organizers are seeking personal stories of individuals who have been experiencing unemployment. These stories will be shared on the Unemployed Nation website, and could become part of the Hearings on March 30-31. People who are interested are encouraged to visit UnemployedNation.Org for more information, or call the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at 206-543-7946.

Press Contact Information

For more information on the Unemployed Nation Hearings, or to schedule an interview with the organizers, please call Andrew Hedden at 206-543-7946 or e-mail unemploy@uw.edu. You may also visit the Unemployed Nation Hearing's website at <http://www.unemployednation.org>.

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Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950*, among other books and essays. She is working on *The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940* and a new biography of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.