



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES

## **Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) Extension: Don't Cut Social Security to Pay For an EUC Extension**

- **A DI/UI offset amendment would permanently cut Social Security to pay for a one-year extension of EUC.** DI and EUC are separate and vital programs that Congress should support; cuts to one should not be used to pay for the other.
- **Cuts to Social Security should not be considered as part of pay-fors on bills unrelated to Social Security.** Any changes to Social Security must be considered as part of thoughtful discussions around how to strengthen Social Security.
- **Encouraging DI beneficiaries to work has long been a cornerstone of bipartisan Congressional policy.** Cutting benefits for DI beneficiaries who have tried to work but have been laid off through no fault of their own could discourage DI beneficiaries from attempting to return to work.
- **Like all Americans, DI beneficiaries who work seek greater economic security for themselves and their families.** The Social Security disability standard is one of the strictest in the developed world. It can take months if not years to qualify for benefits, and most applicants are denied. At the same time, by law DI beneficiaries are encouraged to try to work and can earn up to \$1,070 per month (for 2014) while continuing to receive DI. Part-time work can be vital for people seeking to return to work after a severe injury or illness. In addition, some DI beneficiaries who may never return to work full-time are able to work part-time and rely on the combination of DI benefits and their earnings to meet their living expenses and other basic needs.
- **Cutting Social Security could worsen the financial security of workers with disabilities and their families, at a time when the economy is still so fragile that Congress needs to extend EUC.**
- **Questions exist about how the Social Security Administration would administer such an amendment** (at a time of serious underfunding of SSA's administrative budget), particularly within the already-complex existing DI work incentives framework.
- **UI should be there for all American workers, including workers with some of the most serious disabilities – it's a question of fairness.**

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## Why do People Receive Both UI and DI?

- **By law, DI beneficiaries are encouraged to work. Receiving UI and DI is consistent, legal, and appropriate.** This is the long-standing position of the Social Security Administration and of the courts. Congress has enacted many provisions that encourage DI beneficiaries to work, commonly referred to as “work incentives.” One important provision allows people to earn up to “Substantial Gainful Activity”, or \$1,070 per month in 2014, and continue to keep their DI benefits. This allows DI beneficiaries to try to work while maintaining DI and Medicare if a work attempt fails.
- **The DI and UI programs were established for different purposes and largely serve different populations.** As highlighted in a 2012 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), less than one percent of individuals served by the DI and UI programs receive concurrent benefits.
- **Like all Americans, DI beneficiaries who work seek greater economic security for themselves and their families.** To qualify, DI beneficiaries must meet one of the strictest standards in the developed world. At the same time, some people with serious disabilities who receive DI may be able to work part time (such as people attempting to see if they can return to full-time work), and may lose their part-time job and then receive partial UI. Additionally, the disability and health status of people who receive DI benefits can change, and some people who see their situation improve a little may attempt work, and may qualify for UI if laid off.
- **Concurrent benefits are extremely modest, but can be a lifeline to workers who receive them and their families.** GAO estimates that in FY 2010 the average quarterly overlapping benefit was only about \$1,100 in DI and \$2,200 in UI, for a quarterly average of about \$3,300 in total benefits.
- **Federal policy should continue to encourage DI beneficiaries to work rather than penalize them by treating them differently than any other worker who qualifies for UI benefits.**

**Case Example** -- *Here is a hypothetical example of how not allowing a DI beneficiary to receive both DI and UI could become a work disincentive and be counterproductive.*

A 50-year-old mechanic was hit by a drunk driver, resulting in a spinal cord injury with multiple complications. He is approved for and receives Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) while completing physical and vocational rehabilitation. He receives DI for several years. When his rehabilitation is complete, he participates in a Social Security work incentive program, receives some retraining, and finds a job working part-time 20 hours a week for \$10.25/hour as a sales clerk. However, due to ongoing fatigue, other complications related to his disability, and limited access to personal care attendant services, he cannot work more than 20 hours per week. He earns \$900 per month from his job; with an SSDI benefit of \$1,050 his total income is \$1,950 per month. With this income, he is barely able to afford an apartment on his own. His \$900 from work also allows him to contribute to his personal care and transportation costs. He could not maintain his independence without this extra money.

**If his job is eliminated and he is laid off, any reduction or elimination in his DI or UI benefits could cause him to lose his apartment and leave him unable to meet his basic needs.**