



NY Times Explores Unemployment Benefits Discussion

As talk of another possible extension of unemployment benefits is making its way through Washington, the New York Times recently covered a story on Dan Tolleson (left), a writer with a Ph.D. in politics who has only been able to find short-term work since July of 2009. What fascinated the Times, and likely a number of readers, was the notion that though Tolleson has been unemployed for a lengthy period of time, he stands opposed to an extension of unemployment benefits.



Tolleson explained his stance: “They’re going to end up spending more money on unemployment benefits, while less money is coming in on tax returns. Far better to relax some of these outrageous regulations.”

The *Times* [noted](#):

Make no mistake — Mr. Tolleson, 54, has collected unemployment checks, saying he had little choice. But his objection to a policy that would probably benefit him shows just how divisive the question has become of providing a bigger safety net to the long-term jobless, a common strategy in recessions.

Tolleson applied for one round of unemployment benefits out of desperation, but when those benefits expired, he elected instead to turn to his local church for help. It was then, however, that he was informed by his church that in order to receive some assistance, he would have to apply for another round of unemployment benefits. Seemingly without options, he did so.

Still, Tolleson recognizes that the money is not free, and says he experienced some guilt for accepting that type of aid from the government, knowing it comes from taxpayer dollars. He acknowledges, however, “They either tax it from somebody who’s making money or they’re going to print it — either way, the economy goes down.”

Tolleson contends that it is the government’s failure to allow the free market economy to operate that is stifling the economy and job growth, thereby forcing people to require unemployment benefits.

“When the economy is as suffocated as it has been by government regulations, jobs cannot be created,” Tolleson told *The New American*. “Job seekers are then forced to turn to unemployment benefits.”

He added that unemployment benefits are, in fact, another example of the federal government abandoning free market principles:

In a free market, we would be responsible for setting up our own unemployment benefits, either through unemployment insurance or savings. We would also be more inclined to take advantage of private charity, or assistance through relatives.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 14, 2011

But unfortunately, the way the government has smothered the economy, you cannot find a job to earn the money to buy unemployment insurance or accumulate savings. As much as you wish to not have to ask for help, in the government system we've got, we are forced to pay into the benefits. You're receiving less money than you would in a free market. It is not unlike social security.

Tolleson is seemingly on his way to becoming a de-facto spokesperson for the "unemployed against unemployment benefits" group, as his story appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*, and he has now made appearances on Fox News' *Your World with Neil Cavuto* and on *Fox & Friends* this week.

And his time in the limelight may not end there. According to Tolleson, he was informed by producers at Fox News that "there's a buzz" among people about him and that he may be asked to return, because his is a story to which many Americans can relate, particularly those who oppose entitlement programs but find themselves without any options but to use them.

According to the Census Bureau, seven million Americans were receiving unemployment benefits last September, three million of whom were reportedly raised out of poverty as a result of the payments.

However, the White House estimates that further extensions to unemployment benefits will cost \$49 billion.

Tolleson opposes Obama's efforts to continue offering benefits as part of his jobs bill — a bill that the President has called on Congress more than once to pass.

If the jobs bill is not passed, more than two million people will be without unemployment benefits as early as mid-February, says the Department of Labor. And over the course of the year, it adds, that figure would jump to six million.

Proponents of the extension of unemployment benefits argue that because job growth continues to be minimal, it will be virtually impossible for those on unemployment to find work, particularly if the market is flooded with people desperate to find work once the unemployment checks stop.

Conservatives, on the other hand, point out that the money used to pay unemployment checks is pulled from other areas of the economy, in turn stifling job growth. Likewise, they contend that unemployment benefits create a class of Americans whose increasing reliance on the federal government lessens their will to seek work.

President Obama's head of the Council of Economic Advisers, Alan Krueger, has made similar assertions, claiming that increasing unemployment benefits simply extends unemployment. Private economists have also made these claims. One study by the San Francisco Federal Reserve confirmed these assertions, revealing that the benefit extensions last year increased the rate of unemployment by four-tenths of a percentage point.

A large portion of taxpayers are opposed to the extension of unemployment benefits because they view the entire expenditure as another example of big government redistributing wealth. As noted by the *Times*, some of those taxpayers would rather see the money put to better use, such as for infrastructure, while others would prefer that the government simply be less involved in people's lives, and stop interfering with the market through an abundance of regulations which make it difficult to create jobs.

It is to this latter group that Tolleson belongs, and he is not alone. A recent survey conducted by Rutgers University shows that nearly half of those polled oppose renewing unemployment benefits,



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while three out of five respondents believe that recipients of unemployment benefits should at the very least be required to take training courses.

Some who would have once agreed with Tolleson regarding unemployment benefits have found themselves shifting their stances as a result of their own circumstances. Detroit resident Theresa Gorski, for example, who has been out of work for 17 months, commented about taking unemployment benefits,

If you would have asked me five years ago, I would have said no, because I always considered myself a Republican. But now being in this position, with a college education and lots of work experience behind me, I find myself swinging more liberal, and more Democrat. And that would never have happened before.

Some analysts contend that this is in fact the goal for many Democrats who support big government programs — to accumulate more power and favor with the American people. Biggovernment.com claims it is that very reason that Democrats are opposed to fiscal conservatism and a balanced budget amendment:

The bottom line for Democrats is that a constitutional law forcing spending and revenue to equate signifies a massive loss of political power. Democrats in Congress claim that a balanced budget will devastate the economy because they will not have the ability to spend discretionary dollars whenever they see fit (i.e., when they deem it necessary for the economy).... Democrats refuse, no matter how fiscally wise, to give up the substantial power that comes with spending taxpayer (and borrowed) dollars.

Observers note that as more people are unemployed for longer periods during this recession, concerns are being raised over the significant increase in their reliance on the federal government.

A number of proud and hard-working Americans contend that being unemployed should force people to reconsider their vocations. Preston Venzant, 47, for example, lost his job in Houston repairing commercial kitchen equipment. Refusing to accept unemployment benefits, Venzant declared:

I don't want the federal government giving me an incentive not to work, period. My personal opinion is, you're supposed to go find work, and if you can't find it in the business that you were once in, be it a CEO or a street sweeper, you have to find employment and your lifestyle has to change — so be it.



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