FACT SHEET

Long-term Unemployment and Older Workers

- Over 3 million Americans have been searching for work for at least six months – without access to emergency unemployment benefits.

- Five years into the economic “recovery,” 9.5 million Americans are jobless and looking for work; 7.5 million people are working part-time when they want full-time employment; and another 6 million don’t have jobs and have given up looking. (If the “missing” six million were still searching for work, the official unemployment rate would be 9.6%, according to the Economic Policy Institute.)

- There are still about two job seekers for every job opening, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- Almost half of unemployed workers over 55 years old have been unemployed for more than 6 months.

- In fact, the average spell of unemployment for women 55-64 years old is 53 weeks – more than a year; the average spell for men 55-64 years old is 49 weeks, according to the National Women’s Law Center.

- The long-term unemployment rate for older workers today is three and half times what was in 2007, according to Heidi Shierholz at EPI.

- When EUC was approved in 2008 under the Bush Administration, the unemployment rate was 5.6%, and the average spell of unemployment lasted 4 months; today, the unemployment rate is 6.1 percent and the average spell of unemployment is almost 9 months.
Number of unemployed far outstrips number of available jobs across the board
Unemployed and job openings, by industry (in thousands)

Note: Because the data are not seasonally adjusted, these are 12-month averages, June 2013–May 2014.
Source: BLS analysis of data from the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey and the Current Population Survey