

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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121st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2003

Legislative Document

No. 797

S.P. 276

In Senate, February 20, 2003

Resolve, To Provide Health Insurance to Unemployed Workers

(EMERGENCY)

Reference to the Committee on Labor suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joy J. O'Brien".

JOY J. O'BRIEN
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by President DAGGETT of Kennebec.

Cosponsored by Representative HUTTON of Bowdoinham and

Senators: HATCH of Somerset, LEMONT of York, TREAT of Kennebec, Representatives:

Speaker COLWELL of Gardiner, KANE of Saco, PATRICK of Rumford.

2 **Emergency preamble.** **Whereas,** Acts and resolves of the
Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after
adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

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6 **Whereas,** thousands of unemployed workers in the State are
struggling to provide the necessities of life for themselves and
their families; and

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10 **Whereas,** given the high cost of health insurance, it is
particularly difficult for unemployed workers to pay for
continued health insurance coverage for themselves and family
members; and

14 **Whereas,** the federal Trade Adjustment Assistance Reform Act
of 2002, Public Law 107-210 allows states to apply for grants to
help eligible unemployed workers pay for the costs of continued
health insurance coverage; and

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20 **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts
create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of
Maine and require the following legislation as immediately
necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and
safety; now, therefore, be it

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26 **Sec. 1. Immediate application for grant. Resolved:** That the
Department of Labor shall expeditiously apply for a national
emergency grant under Section 203 of the federal Trade Adjustment
Assistance Reform Act of 2002, Public Law 107-210 and use the
grant funds to provide health insurance coverage for eligible
unemployed workers as permitted under the Trade Adjustment
Assistance Reform Act of 2002; and be it further

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34 **Sec. 2. Ongoing assistance to unemployed workers. Resolved:** That
the Department of Labor shall develop options for establishing an
ongoing program to provide health insurance for all unemployed
workers and shall submit a report on the options to the
Legislature not later than January 1, 2004. The Joint Standing
Committee on Labor is authorized to report out legislation to the
Second Regular Session of the 121st Legislature following receipt
of the report.

42 **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the
preamble, this resolve takes effect when approved.

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SUMMARY

48 The Trade Adjustment Assistance Reform Act of 2002, Public
Law 107-210 provides tax credits for unemployed persons who pay

2 for certain types of health insurance coverage, such as COBRA
3 continuation coverage. The Act also allows states to apply for
4 national emergency grants under the federal Workforce Investment
5 Act to provide funds to eligible unemployed persons to pay for
6 health insurance coverage before the tax credits become available.

7 This bill directs the Department of Labor to apply to the
8 federal government for a national emergency grant to provide
9 health insurance for eligible unemployed workers. It also
10 requires the Department of Labor to review options for providing
11 health insurance to other unemployed workers and to report
12 recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor. The
13 committee is authorized to report out legislation to the Second
14 Regular Session of the 121st Legislature.