



Donald L. Carcieri  
Governor

# NEWS

## Office of the Governor

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## **Governor Carcieri Signs Legislation Allowing Access to COBRA Subsidies for Unemployed Small Business Workers**

Governor Donald L. Carcieri today joined Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts, Majority Leader Gordon Fox, and Senator Frank A. Devall, Jr. at a press conference to sign H 6099/S 843 into law. The legislation opens an enrollment period for individuals eligible for Rhode Island Extended Benefits (Mini COBRA) who became unemployed on or after September 1, 2008, giving unemployed workers of small businesses access to COBRA subsidies under the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

“Today we are taking another step forward in our collective efforts to help Rhode Islanders through these difficult times,” said Governor Carcieri. “This is about giving hundreds of Rhode Islanders the tools they need to ensure their health and well being and reduce expenses during these hard economic times. We have seen a great spirit of cooperation on this effort. This is enabling us to better leverage the funds from the federal stimulus package and meet the needs of Rhode Islanders more effectively. The teamwork among my administration, the Lieutenant Governor and the General Assembly Leadership is bringing about positive results for our residents in a time of great need.”

“Today a gap that would prevent hundreds of laid-off Rhode Islanders from accessing federal help has closed, thanks to rapid and coordinated action by bill sponsors Rep. Kennedy and Sen. DeVall, the House and Senate leadership, the Governor, Rhode Island Health insurers and the Health Insurance Commissioner,” said Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts.

ARRA provides for a subsidy for COBRA participants of 65 percent of the insurance premium. Rhode Island Extended Benefits (Mini COBRA) is an extension of the federal COBRA program for companies with fewer than 20 employees and companies that have closed. The legislation allows for those involuntarily terminated to opt back in to the program now made more affordable by the increased federal subsidy, retroactive to March 1, 2009. The enrollment window for those who would like to opt back into the program will close May 1, 2009. Individuals must contact their health insurance provider to enroll or visit the Office of the Health Commissioner at <http://www.ohic.ri.gov> for more information.

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