

House Bill 500

By: Representatives Pruett of the 144th, England of the 108th, Hembree of the 67th, Harden of the 28th, Carter of the 175th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 7 of Chapter 8 of Title 34 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to unemployment compensation benefits, so as to establish the Employment
3 Readiness Program for Georgia's unemployed; to provide for the administration of the
4 program by the Department of Labor; to provide for participation in the Employment
5 Readiness Program by persons receiving extended unemployment compensation benefits;
6 to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date and applicability; to repeal
7 conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

9 **SECTION 1.**

10 Article 7 of Chapter 8 of Title 34 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
11 unemployment compensation benefits, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as
12 follows:

13 "34-8-200.

14 (a) The Commissioner shall institute the Employment Readiness Program for claimants
15 receiving extended unemployment compensation benefits pursuant to this article. The
16 program shall require participation in the Georgia Work Ready initiative established in
17 Chapter 14 of this title. Such program shall be developed and implemented in cooperation
18 with the Governor's Office of Workforce Development and the Georgia Workforce
19 Investment Board. The program shall be administered by the department provided funding
20 is made available for such purposes.

21 (b) The Employment Readiness Program for Georgia's unemployed shall be funded by
22 federal funds received by this state for implementation of the Georgia Work Ready
23 initiative and such other funding sources, including grants, donations, and appropriations,
24 that may become available to the department.

25 (c) The Employment Readiness Program shall have such requirements for implementation
26 and administration as the Commissioner deems appropriate; provided, however, the
27 program shall include the following:

28 (1) As provided in this Code section, participation in the Employment Readiness
29 Program shall be a condition of a claimant's weekly reporting requirements;

30 (2) Participation in the Employment Readiness Program shall only be a condition of a
31 claimant's weekly reporting requirements when adequate opportunities for participation
32 in the program are reasonably available to a claimant;

33 (3) Following the date for receipt of extended benefits, as indicated by the department
34 through sufficient notice to the claimant, a claimant shall have, as a condition of the
35 claimant's weekly reporting requirements, two weeks to enroll in the Georgia Work
36 Ready initiative;

37 (4) A claimant for unemployment compensation benefits shall not be required to
38 participate in the Georgia Work Ready initiative until he or she receives such benefits for
39 an extended period of time. The extended benefit period shall be designated by the
40 Commissioner in accordance with federal rules, regulations, and law;

41 (5) The program shall require participation in the initial assessment and such evaluation
42 shall be completed within a reasonable time as established by the Commissioner;

43 (6) Following completion of the initial assessment, continuous participation in the
44 Georgia Work Ready initiative, including attendance in educational courses, shall be
45 required as a condition of a claimant's weekly reporting requirements. Continuous
46 participation shall be required until a claimant obtains a Work Ready Certificate
47 indicating that he or she has successfully completed the Georgia Work Ready program.
48 The department shall designate the acceptable educational courses, which may be made
49 available electronically, and shall also prescribe a reasonable time, place, and manner for
50 participation by claimants;

51 (7) The Commissioner shall provide for emergency exceptions to the attendance,
52 participation, and completion requirements of this Code section for good cause
53 demonstrated by the claimant, including, but not limited to, illness, disability,
54 hospitalization, and death of an immediate family member; and

55 (8) The program and courses required by this Code section shall be offered to claimants
56 free of charge.

57 (d) The department shall be authorized to employ and contract with other individuals and
58 organizations as needed to assist in executing the department's responsibilities, provided
59 that funds are available for such expenditures and such expenditures are allowable under
60 federal law.

61 (e) All state departments, institutions, agencies, commissions, councils, authorities, boards,
62 bureaus, or other entities of the state and subdivisions of the state shall provide all
63 information and support as required by the department to perform its duties under this Code
64 section.

65 (f) The Commissioner shall promulgate rules and regulations for purposes of
66 implementing the requirements of this Code section."

67 **SECTION 2.**

68 This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2011, and shall only apply to claimants filing for
69 unemployment compensation benefits on or after such date.

70 **SECTION 3.**

71 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.