



# Kansas Insurance Department

Sandy Praeger, Commissioner of Insurance

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Health insurance legislation to help laid-off workers awaiting governor's signature

TOPEKA, Kan. – A Kansas Insurance Department-sponsored bill passed last week by the state Legislature would help Kansans who recently lost their jobs get health insurance assistance through the new federal stimulus legislation, according to Sandy Praeger, Commissioner of Insurance.

The legislation, HB 2052, provides that certain Kansas employees who have involuntarily lost their jobs since Sept. 1, 2008, can take advantage of the provisions in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, passed by Congress in February. The assistance would pay up to 65 percent of the cost of COBRA health insurance benefits for a laid-off worker for up to nine months.

“Our department has been working to have this bill passed in the Legislature since the federal law was implemented,” Commissioner Praeger said. “We’ve helped the legislature make sure federal and state requirements were addressed in order for the bill to be successful.”

The legislation is on its way to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius to sign into law.

The federal stimulus law amends COBRA (the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act), which provides certain former employees the right to continue their health insurance coverage at group rates on a temporary basis.

Explanations and restrictions for employees can be found online on the Kansas Insurance Department home page, at [www.ksinsurance.org](http://www.ksinsurance.org), in a [question and answer](#) format. Also, employers who need to provide information to laid-off employees are able to [download an eligibility notice through the DOL Web site](#).

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Basically, to be considered an “Assisted Eligible Individual,” and pay reduced premiums under the federal act, a person:

- Must be eligible for continuation coverage at any time during the period from Sept. 1, 2008, through Dec. 31, 2009, and elect the coverage.
- Must have a continuation coverage election opportunity related to an involuntary termination of employment that occurred during the September 2008-December 2009 time frame.
- Must **not** be eligible for Medicare.
- Must **not** be eligible for coverage under any other group health plan, such as a plan sponsored by a successor employer or a spouse’s employer.

“We certainly want to help unemployed Kansans keep their health insurance benefits as they work to obtain new employment,” Commissioner Praeger said.

Those with questions can go to the department’s Web site or call the department’s Consumer Assistance Division, 800-432-2484.

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*The Kansas Insurance Department, established in 1871, assists and educates consumers, regulates and reviews companies and licenses agents selling insurance products in the state. More about the department is online at [www.ksinsurance.org](http://www.ksinsurance.org).*