

Unemployment

Tax bill passage could increase benefits for many...

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

If Congress approves President Ronald Reagan's \$98.3 billion tax proposal complete with the unemployment benefit extension package, thousands of Michigan residents could get more money.

About 39 percent of people in the state collecting unemployment checks during 1981 exhausted their benefits.

"We'd get an increase claim load of about 6,000, if it's approved," said Gloria Hardiman, director of the Royal Oak office of the Michigan Employment Security Commission.

Throughout Michigan, 35-40 percent of the people whose unemployment benefits were ended would resume receiving payments if the proposed 10-week extension is granted, said Isadore Stein,

state chief of unemployment research and federal reports.

Under the present unemployment system, people who worked at least 35 weeks are entitled to maximum benefits of 26 weekly payments, which is about 70 percent of their regular salary.

THEY MAY also apply for a 13-week extension and are paid half of their original claim.

If the new extension passes, they would be able to receive benefits for another 10 weeks, giving them a maximum of 49 weeks worth of benefit checks, Hardiman said.

"We don't know what percentage of their benefit they would get if the extension is approved or how many people would be eligible," she said.

Predicting whether the tax package will pass is difficult, said U.S. Sen. Don Riegle. But he is sure

the unemployment provisions will come before the legislators in some form.

"Unemployment benefit extensions are clearly needed, but the president's bill is using it as a form of blackmail. It says if you don't approve the tax hikes, you don't get the unemployment extensions," Riegle said.

"In every previous recession, there has always been extensions for unemployment benefits. If we defeat the tax bill, we're going to offer unemployment extensions on another piece of legislation, and we have the votes to pass it alone."

ABOUT 25,000 Oakland County residents pass through the doors of Royal Oak's unemployment office monthly. There is also an unemployment office in Pontiac serving the northern part of the county. Statistics were unavailable at Wayne MESOC offices.

... and low sales shut plants

United States automobile production is languishing at relatively low levels again this week as automakers convert plants to 1983 model car production.

Wards Automotive Reports said low sales are prolonging this mid-summer sojourn. General Motors Corp. has extended changeover downtime at eight of its assembly plants in an attempt to deplete unsold vehicle inventory, and Volkswagen of America Inc. has likewise seized the opportunity of model changeover to reduce its vehicle stock.

Production this week stands at an estimated 69,554 cars, down 9 percent from last week's 76,175 units, but a full 22 percent below production of the same week in 1981, when automakers began accelerating production as they completed changeovers.

In addition to the GM plants on extended model changeover, one additional GM, two Ford Motor Co. and two Chrysler Corp. plants are closed this week for changeover. Ford has idled two plants this week for inventory control and its Dearborn plant is down for the first of two weeks to correct "production problems."

Additionally, GM's Bowling Green, Ky., plant is still idled by strike. Volkswagen's car and truck lines are down for extended changeovers.

Truck production this week crept up to an estimated 32,250 units from last week's 31,539 assemblies. Chrysler's Warren truck plant returned to operation after changeover. One Chrysler and five GM truck plants are down for changeover, and Ford closed one truck facility this week for inventory control.

Of the estimated 69,554 cars built this week, GM is responsible for 70.0 percent; Ford, 18.9 percent; Chrysler, 7.0 percent; and American Motors Corp., 4.1 percent.

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