Washington, DC – Earlier this week, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) introduced legislation to help ensure that workers affected by historic unemployment levels are able to retain healthcare for themselves and their families. The COBRA Coverage Extension Act of 2009 would extend current COBRA health insurance coverage from 18 to 24 months. COBRA was originally enacted in 1985 to provide access to group health insurance for people who lost their employer-sponsored coverage, and thus to help reduce the number of uninsured.

In 2008, 2.6 million Americans lost their jobs, and in many cases, the health coverage that came with these jobs. With the national unemployment rate now at 7.2% -- and Pennsylvania's unemployment up 1.7% from the same period last year -- many more families will be impacted by lost wages and lost health insurance coverage in the coming months, adding to the 1.2 million children who lost employer-based health insurance through their parents in 2008.