

Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund Forecast

September 2014

Executive summary

This report provides the status and updated projections of the state's unemployment insurance trust fund for 2014 through 2021.

Over the past 10 years, Washington's governor and legislature have worked together in a bipartisan manner to develop a stable unemployment insurance tax and benefit system to sustain the state through difficult economic times. Because of this, Washington's trust fund remained solvent while 36 other states exhausted their trust funds and were forced to secure loans from the federal government to maintain unemployment insurance benefits. And Washington's average unemployment tax rate dropped from 2nd-highest in the nation in 2007 to 21st-highest at the beginning of the year.

Contents

This report contains the following items:

- Employer contributions, benefit payments and projected trust fund balance through 2021;
- September 2014 forecast compared to the June 2014 forecast;
- Appendix 1: Economic assumptions for the September 2014 forecast compared to the June 2014 forecast; and
- Appendix 2: States with outstanding loans from the Federal Unemployment Account.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Cynthia L. Forland, Director, Labor Market and Performance Analysis at 360-407-4503 or at cforland@esd.wa.gov.

Introduction

This report provides information on Washington state's employer contributions, benefits and unemployment trust fund current and projected balances. The Employment Security Department's unemployment trust fund projections are reviewed and adjusted several times a year. The adjustments are made by changing several variables in the trust fund model, which are derived from the state's Economic and Revenue Forecast Council's (ERFC) quarterly economic forecast, IHS Global Insight and updated unemployment insurance reciprocity rates, and by replacing forecasted data with the most current actual data.

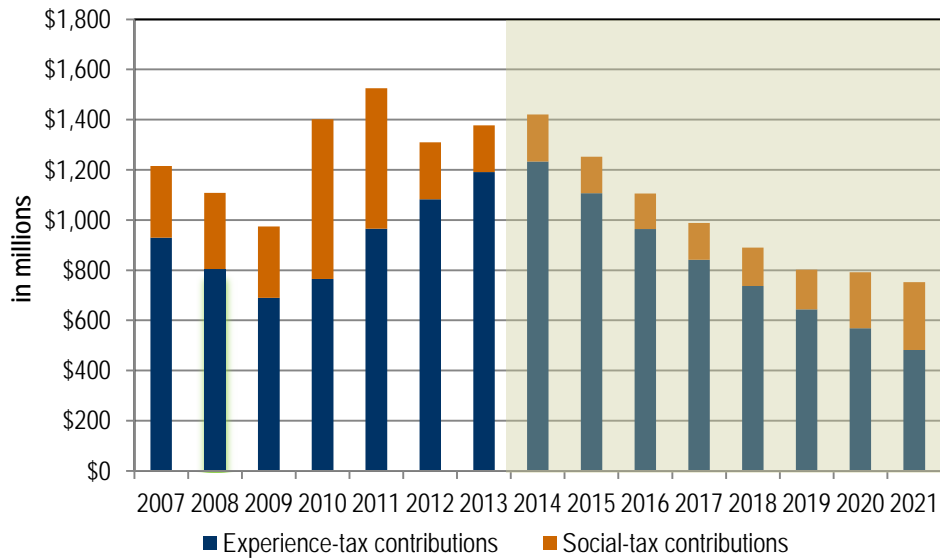
This forecast uses the September 2014 ERFC, September 2014 IHS Global Insight assumptions and actual unemployment insurance tax and benefit data through June 30, 2014. The economic assumptions used for this forecast and the June 2014 forecast are provided in *Appendix 1*.

Employer contributions

Employer contributions were about \$1.38 billion in 2013 and are projected to be approximately \$1.42 billion in 2014. Because each year's experience-rated taxes are based on the benefit payments of the previous four years, we continue to see the impact of the recession's high benefit payments. Beginning in 2015, we see employers' taxes decreasing each year through 2021.

Figure 1 shows projected annual employer experience-rated and social cost contributions through the end of 2021.

Figure 1. Washington state unemployment insurance employer contributions
Washington state, 2007 through 2021
Source: Employment Security Department/LMPA/ETA 2112/UI Wage File



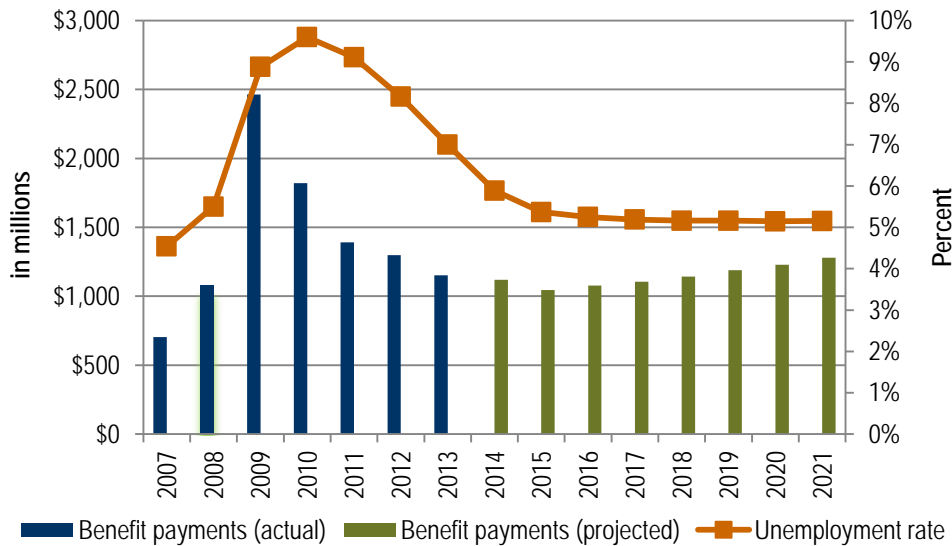
Note: Highlighted years reflect projected data.

Employer contributions were about \$1.38 billion in 2013 and are projected to be approximately \$1.42 billion in 2014.

Unemployment benefit payments

Benefit payments from the unemployment trust fund were approximately \$1.15 billion in 2013 and are projected to be approximately \$1.12 billion in 2014. *Figure 2* shows annual projections of benefit payments from the trust fund and the projected state unemployment rate through 2021. Federally funded benefits such as emergency unemployment compensation (EUC) and extended benefits are excluded from *Figure 2*.

Figure 2. Benefit payments from state unemployment trust fund
Washington state, 2007 through 2021
Source: Employment Security Department/LMPA/ETA 2112/UI Wage File



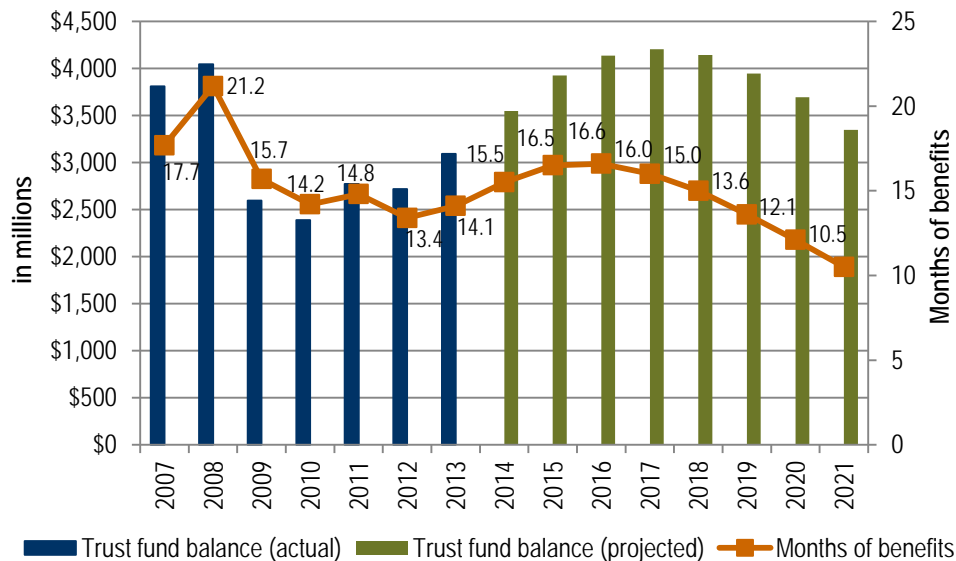
Benefit payments from the trust fund were approximately \$1.15 billion in 2013 and are projected to be approximately \$1.12 billion in 2014.

Trust fund balance

As of September 30, 2014, Washington state had \$3.3 billion (approximately 15.5 months of benefits) in the unemployment trust fund.

Figure 3 below shows the annual projected year-end trust fund balance through 2021. The solid orange line represents the months of benefits available on the date when unemployment insurance tax rates for the following year are calculated (September 30). It is important to note that individual years can have the same trust fund balance, but different months of benefits. There is not one standard cost for a month of benefits; this is seen in Figure 3 below where 2017 is projected to have fewer months of benefits but a higher trust fund balance than 2015 and 2016. The cost of a month of benefits varies depending on how many people in the state are working and how much they are earning.

Figure 3. Washington state unemployment trust fund and months of benefits
Washington state, 2007 through 2021
Source: Employment Security Department/LMPA/ETA 2112/UI Wage File



The trust fund balance was at 14.1 months of benefits at the end of 2013 and is projected to reach 15.5 months of benefits by the end of 2014.

Trust fund scenario: September 2014 forecast compared to June 2014

This scenario compares the September 2014 forecast (top) to the published June 2014 forecast (bottom).

Figure 4. Washington state trust fund forecast
Washington state, September 2014 and June 2014

Source: Employment Security Department/LMPA/ETA 2112/ETA 5159/UI Wage File

Unemployment trust fund: Baseline forecast with 100 percent federally funded extended benefits through December 28, 2013 – September 2014 Baseline (based on actual data through June 30, 2014, and Sept 2014 Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council and Global Insight assumptions)									
Taxes	CY 2013	CY 2014	CY 2015	CY 2016	CY 2017	CY 2018	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021
Average experience-tax rate (percent)	1.75%	1.67%	1.42%	1.17%	0.96%	0.80%	0.66%	0.55%	0.44%
Experience-tax contributions (in millions)	\$1,191.3	\$1,233.1	\$1,106.9	\$963.8	\$841.7	\$737.1	\$643.8	\$569.1	\$482.5
Flat social-tax rate (percent)	0.28%	0.35%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.35%	0.40%
Social-tax contributions (in millions)	\$185.7	\$187.0	\$146.0	\$142.4	\$147.1	\$152.4	\$158.5	\$222.1	\$270.3
Solvency-tax rate (percent)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Solvency-tax contributions	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total average tax rate (experience tax + social tax)	2.02%	1.92%	1.61%	1.34%	1.13%	0.96%	0.82%	0.77%	0.69%
Total tax contributions (in millions)	\$1,377.1	\$1,420.1	\$1,253.0	\$1,106.2	\$988.8	\$889.5	\$802.3	\$791.2	\$752.8
Benefits									
Weeks compensated (in millions) - regular benefits	3.2	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Average weekly benefit amount	\$386.91	\$399.68	\$414.37	\$425.69	\$442.36	\$459.51	\$478.29	\$495.32	\$515.71
Regular benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,152.8	\$1,119.0	\$1,045.2	\$1,077.6	\$1,106.3	\$1,142.2	\$1,188.9	\$1,228.1	\$1,280.0
Extended benefit payments (state share)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total benefit liability (in millions)	\$1,072.4	\$1,051.9	\$982.5	\$1,012.9	\$1,039.9	\$1,073.7	\$1,117.5	\$1,154.4	\$1,203.2
Reimbursable benefit payments (in millions)	\$80.3	\$67.1	\$62.7	\$64.7	\$66.4	\$68.5	\$71.3	\$73.7	\$76.8
Total benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,152.8	\$1,119.0	\$1,045.2	\$1,077.6	\$1,106.3	\$1,142.2	\$1,188.9	\$1,228.1	\$1,280.0
Trust fund									
Beginning trust fund balance (in millions)	\$2,718.3	\$3,093.8	\$3,547.5	\$3,925.4	\$4,135.2	\$4,205.4	\$4,143.1	\$3,946.4	\$3,695.2
Trust fund interest (in millions)	\$70.9	\$85.5	\$107.3	\$116.5	\$121.3	\$121.9	\$118.6	\$111.9	\$103.4
Total tax contributions (in millions)	\$1,377.1	\$1,420.1	\$1,253.0	\$1,106.2	\$988.8	\$889.5	\$802.3	\$791.2	\$752.8
Reimbursements from reimbursables (in millions)	\$80.3	\$67.1	\$62.7	\$64.7	\$66.4	\$68.5	\$71.3	\$73.7	\$76.8
Total benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,152.8	\$1,119.0	\$1,045.2	\$1,077.6	\$1,106.3	\$1,142.2	\$1,188.9	\$1,228.1	\$1,280.0
Temporary \$25 benefit increase	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Ending trust fund balance, as of 12/31 (in millions)	\$3,093.8	\$3,547.5	\$3,925.4	\$4,135.2	\$4,205.4	\$4,143.1	\$3,946.4	\$3,695.2	\$3,348.1
Months of benefits available, as of 9/30	14.1	15.5	16.5	16.6	16.0	15.0	13.6	12.1	10.5
Unemployment trust fund: Baseline forecast with 100 percent federally funded extended benefits through December 28, 2013 – June 2014 forecast (based on actual data through March 31, 2014, and June 2014 Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council and Global Insight assumptions)									
Taxes	CY 2013	CY 2014	CY 2015	CY 2016	CY 2017	CY 2018	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021
Average experience-tax rate (percent)	1.75%	1.82%	1.42%	1.18%	0.99%	0.85%	0.74%	0.65%	0.54%
Experience-tax contributions (in millions)	\$1,191.3	\$1,340.9	\$1,106.3	\$972.6	\$867.7	\$786.3	\$722.4	\$669.1	\$583.7
Flat social-tax rate (percent)	0.28%	0.35%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.35%	0.35%	0.45%
Social-tax contributions (in millions)	\$185.7	\$193.4	\$146.0	\$142.6	\$147.6	\$153.4	\$215.8	\$234.1	\$303.7
Solvency-tax rate (percent)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Solvency-tax contributions	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total average tax rate (experience tax + social tax)	2.02%	2.08%	1.61%	1.35%	1.16%	1.02%	0.96%	0.88%	0.82%
Total tax contributions (in millions)	\$1,377.1	\$1,534.3	\$1,252.3	\$1,115.2	\$1,015.3	\$939.8	\$938.1	\$903.2	\$887.4
Benefits									
Weeks compensated (in millions) - regular benefits	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.5	2.5
Average weekly benefit amount	\$386.91	\$394.56	\$405.53	\$419.18	\$433.94	\$449.87	\$468.30	\$485.11	\$505.69
Regular benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,152.8	\$1,110.7	\$1,109.0	\$1,158.8	\$1,199.6	\$1,241.4	\$1,294.6	\$1,217.2	\$1,287.5
Extended benefit payments (state share)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total benefit liability (in millions)	\$1,072.4	\$1,044.1	\$1,042.4	\$1,089.3	\$1,127.6	\$1,166.9	\$1,216.9	\$1,144.2	\$1,210.3
Reimbursable benefit payments (in millions)	\$80.3	\$66.6	\$66.5	\$69.5	\$72.0	\$74.5	\$77.7	\$73.0	\$77.3
Total benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,152.8	\$1,110.7	\$1,109.0	\$1,158.8	\$1,199.6	\$1,241.4	\$1,294.6	\$1,217.2	\$1,287.5
Trust									
Beginning trust fund balance (in millions)	\$2,718.3	\$3,093.8	\$3,675.1	\$3,996.7	\$4,141.8	\$4,151.5	\$4,045.4	\$3,883.6	\$3,755.3
Trust fund interest (in millions)	\$70.9	\$91.0	\$111.8	\$119.2	\$122.0	\$121.0	\$117.1	\$112.7	\$107.8
Total tax contributions (in millions)	\$1,377.1	\$1,534.3	\$1,252.3	\$1,115.2	\$1,015.3	\$939.8	\$938.1	\$903.2	\$887.4
Reimbursements from reimbursables (in millions)	\$80.3	\$66.6	\$66.5	\$69.5	\$72.0	\$74.5	\$77.7	\$73.0	\$77.3
Total benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,152.8	\$1,110.7	\$1,109.0	\$1,158.8	\$1,199.6	\$1,241.4	\$1,294.6	\$1,217.2	\$1,287.5
Temporary \$25 benefit increase	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Ending trust fund balance, as of 12/31 (in millions)	\$3,093.8	\$3,675.1	\$3,996.7	\$4,141.8	\$4,151.5	\$4,045.4	\$3,883.6	\$3,755.3	\$3,540.3
Months of benefits available, as of 9/30	14.1	15.6	16.4	16.2	15.4	14.3	13	11.9	10.7

Note: The total average tax rate cannot be reached by adding the average experience-tax rate and the flat social-tax rate due to social-tax caps and other factors.

Appendix 1: Economic assumptions

The events since the last forecast have made little impact toward the state's Economic and Revenue Forecast Council's outlook for the future. Overall, revisions to the current economic forecast call for a more optimistic outlook.

The Employment Security Department's unemployment trust fund projections are reviewed and adjusted several times a year. The adjustments are made by changing several variables in the trust fund model, which are derived from the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council's quarterly economic forecast, IHS Global Insight and updated unemployment insurance reciprocity rates, and by replacing forecasted data with the most current actual data. *Figure A-1* shows the major economic inputs used in the trust fund model with a comparison to the prior forecast.

Figure A-1. Washington state economic and revenue projections
Washington state, September 2014 and June 2014
Source: Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council/IHS Global Insight

Unemployment rate (percent of workforce)		
Year	Sept-14	Jun-14
2013	7.00%	7.00%
2014	5.89%	6.10%
2015	5.37%	5.80%
2016	5.25%	5.71%
2017	5.19%	5.71%
2018	5.16%	5.70%
2019	5.16%	5.71%
2020	5.15%	5.21%
2021	5.15%	5.28%

Personal income (percent growth)		
Year	Sept-14	Jun-14
2013	3.20%	3.20%
2014	4.70%	4.40%
2015	4.80%	5.20%
2016	5.80%	5.70%
2017	6.00%	5.70%
2018	5.50%	5.40%
2019	5.40%	4.20%
2020	5.01%	4.98%
2021	4.75%	4.68%

Employment growth (percent growth)		
Year	Sept-14	Jun-14
2013	2.40%	2.40%
2014	2.60%	2.30%
2015	2.00%	2.00%
2016	1.90%	1.90%
2017	1.40%	1.50%
2018	1.30%	1.30%
2019	1.20%	1.10%
2020	0.86%	0.75%
2021	0.56%	0.34%

Consumer Price Index (percent growth)		
Year	Sept-14	Jun-14
2013	1.50%	1.50%
2014	1.80%	1.90%
2015	1.30%	1.80%
2016	1.50%	1.30%
2017	1.80%	1.60%
2018	1.80%	1.70%
2019	1.70%	1.50%
2020	2.21%	2.07%
2021	2.26%	2.16%

Definitions of economic variables:

- **Unemployment rate:** The rate computed by dividing total unemployed by the civilian labor force. The unemployment rate is used as an input into the forecasting of benefits. These unemployment rates are seasonally adjusted. Seasonal adjustment smoothes out the impact of normal seasonal patterns that occur year after year, such as strong seasonal hiring in retail trade around the holidays.
- **Wage and salary disbursements:** This component of personal income consists of the monetary remuneration of employees. It reflects the amount of wages and salaries disbursed, but not necessarily earned, during the year. This component is measured before deductions, such as Social Security contributions and union dues. The percentage growth for wage and salary disbursements is used in projecting future wages.
- **Employment growth:** The percentage change in overall employment from year to year. Employment growth is used in the trust fund model as a means of forecasting total employment.
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI):** A measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services. CPI is used in the forecast as a means of adjusting the dollar values.

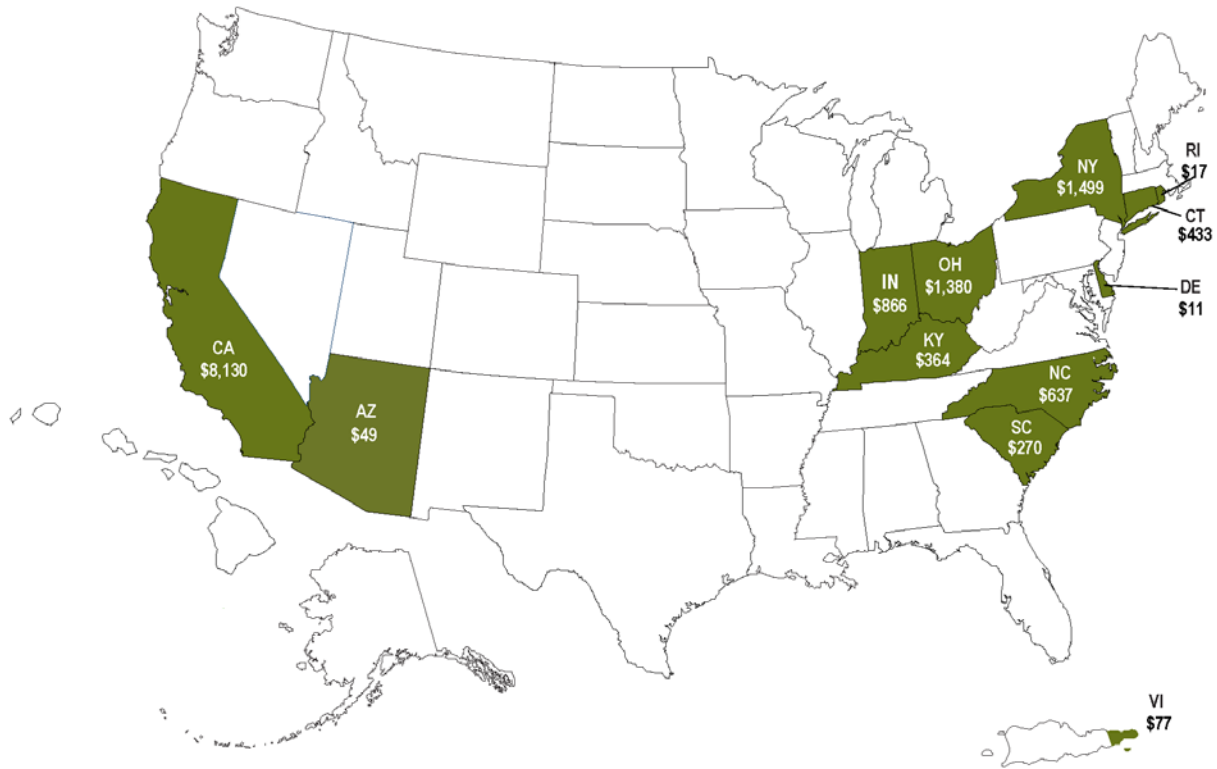
Appendix 2: States with outstanding loans from the Federal Unemployment Account

A total of 36 states/territories have exhausted their trust funds and secured loans from the Federal Unemployment Account during this recession. At their peak, those loans exceeded \$47 billion. Currently, 11 of these states and one territory continue to have outstanding federal loans. The amount recently borrowed or repaid is listed under “Change since” in the table below.

Figure A-2-1. Outstanding loans from the Federal Unemployment Account, in millions
United States, October 8, 2014
Source: U.S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration

State	Outstanding loan balance as of October 8, 2014	Month and year state initially borrowed	Change since September 8, 2014
Alabama	\$0	September 2009	\$0
Arizona	\$49,420,940	March 2010	\$24,544,402
Arkansas	\$0	March 2009	(\$2,982,067)
California	\$8,129,625,889	January 2009	\$351,118,318
Colorado	\$0	January 2010	\$0
Connecticut	\$432,627,820	October 2009	\$0
Delaware	\$10,628,197	March 2010	(\$51,680)
Florida	\$0	August 2009	\$0
Georgia	\$0	December 2009	\$0
Hawaii	\$0	October 2010	\$0
Idaho	\$0	June 2009	\$0
Illinois	\$0	July 2009	\$0
Indiana	\$866,298,650	December 2008	\$23,956,226
Kansas	\$0	March 2010	\$0
Kentucky	\$363,758,548	January 2009	\$21,955,556
Maryland	\$0	February 2010	\$0
Massachusetts	\$0	February 2010	\$0
Michigan	\$0	September 2006	\$0
Minnesota	\$0	July 2009	\$0
Missouri	\$0	February 2009	\$0
Nevada	\$0	October 2009	\$0
New Hampshire	\$0	March 2010	\$0
New Jersey	\$0	March 2009	\$0
New York	\$1,499,197,988	January 2009	\$156,846,696
North Carolina	\$637,337,768	February 2009	\$27,144,802
Ohio	\$1,379,841,685	January 2009	(\$467,005)
Pennsylvania	\$0	March 2009	\$0
Rhode Island	\$16,814,829	March 2009	(\$35,828,989)
South Carolina	\$270,490,527	December 2008	\$0
South Dakota	\$0	October 2009	\$0
Tennessee	\$0	April 2010	\$0
Texas	\$0	July 2009	\$0
Vermont	\$0	March 2010	\$0
Virgin Islands	\$76,948,384	August 2009	(\$52,873)
Virginia	\$0	October 2009	\$0
Wisconsin	\$0	February 2009	\$0
Total	\$13,732,991,225		\$566,183,387

Figure A-2-2. Outstanding loans from the Federal Unemployment Account, in millions
United States, October 8, 2014
Source: U.S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration



This map shows the contiguous United States and insets of Hawaii, Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.