

Heller, Amodei on opposite sides of extending unemployment benefits

By Amber Phillips, Las Vegas Sun

WASHINGTON – Sen. Dean Heller has invested months lobbying his colleagues to extend benefits for unemployed Americans.

In a rare feat of bipartisanship, Republicans and Democrats from Nevada's six-person delegation have backed Heller's effort to renew benefits for the long-term unemployed after Congress let the program expire in December.

The bill has become personal for Heller because Nevada's unemployment rate remains stubbornly high at 7.9 percent, the second highest in the country. "This year has been extremely difficult for Nevadans who still do not know how they are going to pay their bills or feed their families," Heller said in a recent press conference.

But there has been one noticeable holdout from Nevada's delegation: Republican Rep. Mark Amodei.

Amodei, who represents Reno and Carson City, didn't support extending the benefits when it passed the Senate and died in the House this spring, and he isn't sure he'll join in this time, either.

Amodei's opposition falls in line with House Speaker John Boehner. Despite Heller's repeated calls on Boehner for support, the Ohio Republican hasn't brought the bill to a House vote.

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