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New California law offers health aid to those laid off by small firms

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Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed legislation Tuesday to help tens of thousands of workers laid off from small businesses obtain a federal subsidy for health insurance.

The measure will help workers terminated since September by small firms – fewer than 20 employees – to qualify for nine months of federal aid paying 65 percent of their insurance premium.

Assembly Bill 23, which will take effect immediately, was crafted by Assemblymen **Dave Jones, D-Sacramento**, and Nathan Fletcher, R-San Diego. Similar aid already is available to workers laid off from larger firms.