* A couple of weeks ago, the [Department of Labor](http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/ETA20121073.htm) issued [guidelines](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/UIPL/UIPL_20_12_acc.pdf) for the $35 million Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) Program that was tucked into the payroll tax-unemployment extension bill [passed in March](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr3630enr/pdf/BILLS-112hr3630enr.pdf).
* The money can be used by states to offer a Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) Program. If California implements a program it will receive at least $5.3 million in federal money, maybe more if some states don’t claim the money.
* Under the SEA program, unemployed workers will be able to maintain their unemployment insurance benefits while they start their own small businesses – a full-time job in its own right – without having to look for other full-time work. Currently, in California this is not the case.
* California has had double digit unemployment for more than three years.  In this time of persistent high unemployment, we need to do everything we can to encourage job creation.  We must recognize and embrace the fact that self-employment creates at least one job per start-up, for the owner.
* We need to unleash the entrepreneurial potential of the unemployed who could become self-employed.  California needs this new SEA program.
  + The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that five percent of the unemployed have entrepreneurial potential. Thus, an estimated 100,000 people in California could benefit from the SEA program.  If only half of those unemployed entrepreneurs obtained help in starting a business (50,000), they would create a projected total of 120,000 jobs over 3-5 years.
* California had such a program in the late 1990′s, but it was abandoned. People didn’t take advantage of the program because they couldn’t qualify for their unemployment insurance extension and there was a lack of training.  Few even knew about it.  The new SEA corrects these problems.
* To get funds to operate SEA, the California legislature needs to pass a bill or Governor Jerry Brown can issue an Executive Order to create the program.   Whatever mechanism is used, California leaders have the opportunity to assist the unemployed to become self-employed, create jobs, and reduce the unemployment rolls – all at the same time.