

Unemployment hit 10.2 percent, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced Friday, marking a 26-year high and setting an all-time record for men. The bureau's commissioner, Keith Hall, said job losses have slowed down but a return to pre-recession unemployment levels could still be years away.

"The labor market continues to shed a significant number of jobs," Hall said during the Joint Economic Committee hearing. "The bright spot is that the job loss has moderated over the last few months."

Lawmakers were quick to point fingers and with a vote on the House health care bill set for Saturday, they predictably used the numbers to voice their opposition or support of the measure.

The numbers come after October witnessed the loss of 190,000 more jobs, pushing unemployment from 9.8 percent to 10.2 percent, and setting a record for adult men, who suffer from an all-time high of 10.7 percent unemployment. Adult women have 8.1 percent unemployment.

"This is very bad news, but it's frankly not that surprising," California Republican Rep. John Campbell said while citing the Barack Obama administration's "job killing agenda" involving enormous spending.

"There seems to be a little revision of history here," New York Democratic Chair Rep. Carolyn Maloney interjected. "When President Obama took office, we were losing 700,000 jobs a month." She said that despite continued losses, "we are moving in the right direction with 3.5 gross domestic product and improved job loss."

Just last week, the Bureau of Economic Analysis announced that the economy grew by 3.5 percent during July through September. It had been a year since the economy had grown at all, and was the strongest in two years. A significant portion of that growth, however, was credited to the cash for clunkers program, which has now ended.

Maloney reminded the audience that the Barack Obama administration took office "just ten short months ago."

"I think the American people are tired of excuses," Texas Ranking Member Rep. Kevin Brady said in reply.

Taking a jab at the House health bill, Texas Republican Rep. Michael Burgess said, "The one sector that's growing is health care and we're going to change that."

Democrats countered that that efforts by government to stimulate the economy have had a positive effect and urged fellow lawmakers to continue the good work in passing the House health bill.

"Despite the progress, this morning's employment report is a clear indicator of the work we have left to do," Maloney said.

October brought the total losses for the recession to 7.3 million since its beginning 22 months ago. Since the Great Depression, it has resulted in the biggest job losses and has lasted the longest, beginning in December of 2007.

1983 was the last time such high unemployment was seen.

The unemployment rate only accounts for people who are looking for work, but it is one of six different measurements the government uses to gauge employment.

The measurement with the broadest definition for unemployment - which includes those that

have stopped looking because they grew discouraged and those that are not working as much as they would like - is at 17.5 percent, the highest since the category was established in 1994.

Maloney said that economists have estimated it will take 10.7 million jobs to get unemployment back to pre-recession levels. She asked how long that could take. "We're talking in excess of 3 years," Hall replied.

A growth in jobs is widely understood to be one of the last responses to an improving economy.

Construction, manufacturing and retail sectors sustained the worst job losses in October. The health care continued its trend of job growth, generating 29,000 jobs last month. In fact, the sector has seen 5.3 percent job growth since the beginning of the recession.

Americans without a high school diploma suffered from a 15.5 percent unemployment rate in October while those who graduated from high school without going onto college had 11.2 percent unemployment. Americans with just some college had 9 percent unemployment while those with at least a bachelor's degree had a 4.7 unemployment rate.

Unemployment grew slightly among the racial and ethnic groups. Seasonally adjusted data was not taken for Asians but the group had the lowest unemployment. Whites had a 9.5 percent unemployment rate with Hispanics third at 13.1 percent. Blacks had the highest unemployment, at 15.7 percent.