



MEDIA RELEASE

CT Department of Labor *Communications Office*
Commissioner Kurt Westby

LABOR DEPARTMENT PROVIDES UPDATES TO EMPLOYEES, EMPLOYERS FOLLOWING RECORD NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT APPLICATIONS *DOL offers guidance to employees to help speed up their claim approval*

APRIL 3, 2020

According to Connecticut Department of Labor Commissioner Kurt Westby, the agency has processed more than 90,000 of the over 250,000 unemployment claims filed in less than three weeks by residents affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of claims recently received far exceeds the amount the agency typically receives in one year.

The numbers in Connecticut are staggering, but not unique. Unemployment claims are up in record numbers across the country, and everyone is doing their best to process claims as quickly as possible.

“The agency is working diligently to serve its residents and appreciates the public’s patience as it works to process the thousands of claims that have been filed as a result of the pandemic. We want to let people know that although it will take some time, all eligible claims will be processed, paid, and retroactive to the date they were filed.” Said Commissioner Kurt Westby.

Agency employees are working overtime and weekends to ensure benefits are paid as quickly as possible, Westby said the estimated backlog is approximately five weeks.

“More than 80 employees are now processing claims – a significant increase from the 20 typically processing new applications – and we continue to recruit and train additional staff to assist in the upcoming weeks,” Westby said.

To speed up the processing of their claims, unemployed residents who have ***not yet filed*** should:

- Visit www.filectui.com;
- Click first on the message above the large blue button that notes: “for quicker payment if unemployment benefit, please follow these instructions.” The link will bring claimants to a guide that should be read BEFORE filing for benefits.
- The guide will provide guidance on filing claims as a “Temporary Shutdown” option and provide guidance on entering a Return to Work date.

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For residents that have already filed a claim, Westby noted that it is very important that they check their email (including Junk and Spam folders) daily for updated messages from the Labor Department. Messages may include next steps or a request that claimants log back onto their claim since following these instructions will help speed up processing.

[Additional information for the public is available on the agency's FAQs that have been developed in response to questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

Information from the US Department of Labor

According to the US Department of Labor, the nationwide advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 6,648,000 for the week ending March 28 -- an increase of 3,341,000 from the previous week's revised level. This marks the highest level of seasonally adjusted initial claims in the history of the seasonally adjusted series.

"All states are struggling to process the large volume of claims, and many, including Connecticut, are working with old computer systems," Westby noted. He added that although CTDOL is developing a new, more automated computer system, it will not be in operation until mid-2021. Currently, the agency uses a 40-year-old system comprised of a COBOL mainframe and four other separate systems.

As part of the CARES ACT package approved March 29, 2020 by Congress, the agency is also tasked with providing several federal stimulus unemployment benefits programs. The agency is fortunate to be part of the ReEmployUSA five-state consortium made up of Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, Mississippi and Oklahoma. Although the state joined the consortium to build a new benefits system more quickly, the consortium is now lending its expertise to help develop necessary programming to provide the federal benefit programs more quickly.

"Our employees appreciate the support we have received from the public, the Governor's Office, and other agencies, including technical support from BEST and human resource help from the Department of Administrative Services. The agency has helped people survive economic recessions, but this is the first pandemic we have faced when providing unemployment benefits. We know bills need to be paid and how important it is to provide this economic lifeline to our residents."

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