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## **Secretary Gassman Announces \$2.5 Million Grant to Upgrade Unemployment Insurance System**

### ***Will Build on Steps State's Already Taken to Pay Benefits Quickly, Improve System***

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman announced today that Wisconsin has been awarded a \$2,458,324 grant by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to make technology upgrades that will improve the operation of the state's unemployment insurance system.

"Unemployment insurance is a critical lifeline for Wisconsin working families struggling through the national economic recession," Secretary Gassman said. "This funding will help us build on improvements we've already made to strengthen the system and ensure benefits are paid promptly."

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) will use the grant money to:

- Upgrade and replace the state's 10-year old system used for taking telephone claims;
- Develop and implement a new system to help the department schedule UI appeals faster and more efficiently; and
- Further advance the State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) – a new national electronic system developed by a consortium of states led by Wisconsin and the U.S. Department of Labor. SIDES is designed to improve the timeliness and quality of information submitted by employers, resulting in claims being paid faster and at less cost to the states and employers.

The grant will also help DWD build on steps already taken to improve the system as claims approached record levels nearly a year ago. The department has reassigned staff, enlisted the help of retirees, increased hours of operation on weekdays, added weekend shifts, and hired 100 new workers, with 70 more new workers currently being hired. DWD has also streamlined the filing process to make it easier, doubled the system's server capacity, added phone lines, and improved the flow of calls.

For quicker service, people are encouraged to file online at [www.ucclaim-wi.org](http://www.ucclaim-wi.org), and to call during off hours or later in the week if they cannot get through on Mondays and Tuesdays when the greatest number of calls occur. Ongoing efforts to strengthen the system have achieved dramatic results, with most callers now getting through within minutes and most benefits paid within a week, quicker than the federal requirement of payment within 21 days.

Further information on the ETA State Unemployment Insurance Technology Infrastructure Grants is available on ETA's Web site at <http://www.doleta.gov>.