

Jim Doyle  
Governor

Roberta Gassman  
Secretary



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
201 East Washington Avenue  
P.O. Box 7946  
Madison, WI 53707-7946  
Telephone: (608) 266-3131  
Fax: (608) 266-1784  
<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/>  
e-mail: [dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us](mailto:dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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CONTACT: Dick Jones, Agency Liaison, 608-267-4780

**State providing unemployed critical lifeline**  
*Taking record claims, paying benefits quickly, improving system*

**Secretary Roberta Gassman, Department of Workforce Development  
September 2009**

Tough as the Great Depression was, one positive result was unemployment insurance, a truly great reform developed during the depths of the Great Depression. And it began right here in Wisconsin. Now, as working families struggle through the current national economic downturn, the state of Wisconsin is again there for people out of work, providing a lifeline of benefits to the unemployed.

At the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, we are taking claims at record levels and acting fast to get checks into the hands of unemployed workers. Benefits are paid in a matter of days. If there is a question about a claim, we work to resolve the issue as quickly as possible, ensuring benefits to all who are eligible. All the while, in these extraordinary times, we are seizing every opportunity to improve the system.

Wisconsin's unemployment insurance system is one of our most important programs. We are dedicated to ensuring that every single eligible unemployed worker is paid benefits promptly.

In other states, unemployment insurance systems crashed under the weight of unprecedented claims. Wisconsin's system did not. When claims approached record levels nearly a year ago, we responded quickly. We reassigned staff to handle the increasing workload. We enlisted the help of our retirees. We increased our hours of operation on weekdays and added weekend shifts. We hired 100 new workers, and we are hiring 70 more.

For quicker service, we encourage people to file online, [www.ucclaim-wi.org](http://www.ucclaim-wi.org). We have streamlined the process to make it easier, and doubled our system's server capacity to keep things running smoothly. We encourage people to call during off hours or later in the week if they cannot get through on Mondays or Tuesdays when the greatest number of calls occur. We have added phone lines and improved the flow of calls. As we have taken steps to improve the system, we above all have been flexible, allowing claims beyond usual filing deadlines.

These ongoing efforts to strengthen the system have achieved dramatic results. Last January, too many callers waited 30 minutes or more to get through. Most callers now get through within minutes. Most benefits are paid within a week, quicker than the federal requirement of payment within 21 days.

In the face of extraordinary challenges, our unemployment insurance system is working well. With our additional workload, we are working hard to make improvements, while getting needed checks to the unemployed.

We continue to stand with the unemployed workers of Wisconsin. We know that unemployment insurance is their lifeline, helping them survive what has been such a deep, prolonged national recession. That's why we are working hard for a future of recovery and financial stability for all Wisconsin workers.