

New Legislation Would Fix Unemployment Benefits Problems

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Bills would roll back barriers to Unemployment Insurance (UI) imposed during decade of misguided anti-worker legislation.

WEST POINT – Republicans spent years putting in place hurdles that hardworking Wisconsinites have to navigate in order to receive Unemployment Benefits that they have earned. What is worse, during a global pandemic, Republicans have spent more time on political name-calling than acting to address the challenges that the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is facing today, too many of which stem from the obstacles that the GOP have created. Wisconsinites deserve more than empty promises and political games.

With the unprecedented circumstances that our state is facing, the legislature should be working to alleviate some of the pressures on DWD and help them process claims faster. DWD has already increased staffing, added call centers, and streamlined systems, but there is more that we can do. That is why Wisconsin Legislative Democrats announced a package of legislation to remove Republican-implemented restrictions and barriers that will allow DWD to ensure Wisconsinites can access their earned benefits faster.



I am happy to be the lead on two bills in the package:

LRB 6254 - The current definition of “suitable work” creates challenges for claimants. This bill reinstates DWD’s authority to determine by administrative rule what constitutes suitable work a claimant must accept if offered, and what labor market conditions to review based on the number of weeks that the claimant has received benefits.

LRB 6256 - Several laws enacted over the last decade have restricted DWD’s ability to increase access to unemployment insurance when appropriate. This bill expands DWD’s authority to promulgate rules that provide waivers for work search and job registration requirements.

I will also be a sponsor of legislation to remove the punitive ban on Unemployment benefits for Wisconsin workers who receive social security disability (SSDI).

These bills are a part of a package that will help Wisconsinites access the resources they need. In the 100+ days since the declared public health emergency started, GOP legislators have only met one time to pass a band aid fix to the problems that our state is facing, while making statements acknowledging that more needs to be done. Now is the time for Republicans to live up to that promise and pass meaningful reform to our unemployment system. I also hope that the Governor will call us into a special session to pass these bills as soon as possible.

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