

Rep. Nygren: Dept. of Workforce Development must extend Unemployment Insurance Call Center hours immediately

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Madison—State Representative John Nygren (R-Marinette), Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Finance released the following statement:

“According to DWD’s website, call-centers are only open Monday through Friday from 7:35 AM until 3:30 PM, less than 40 hours in a week,” said Rep. Nygren. “This is unacceptable. Secretary Frostman needs to extend call center hours until the last unemployment claim is settled. Other states like Michigan and California have done this, why can’t Wisconsin?”

“As the COVID-19 pandemic continues in our state, the Department of Workforce Development’s (DWD) woes persist at the expense of tens of thousands of Wisconsinites,” said Rep. Nygren. “On a daily basis, I receive phone calls and emails from distraught taxpayers who have been waiting over a month to speak with someone at DWD regarding their unemployment claim. This is inexcusable.”

Recently, 36 Republicans sent a letter to DWD Secretary Caleb Frostman urging DWD to explore all options necessary to speed up the processing of Unemployment Insurance claims. One option suggested was developing pre-approval procedures for certain Unemployment Insurance claims that have a high likelihood of approval, pending any reviews the Department may need to conduct. Similar practices are done in Medicaid to allow vulnerable individuals to receive healthcare as expeditiously as possible.

Due to action at the federal level, DWD is eligible for \$18.9 million in federal administrative funds. This federal funding helps with administrative costs like responding to and fulfilling requests. The Governor's \$2 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund could also be used for this. Additionally, the bill Governor Evers signed into law last month allows the transfer of state employees between agencies.

"As has been the case since day one, the Evers administration and his secretaries continue to flat out ignore input from the Legislative branch and the people of Wisconsin," said Rep. Nygren. "Governor Evers and Secretary Frostman should be held accountable for their mishandling of unemployment insurance claims."