

# Sen. Hansen: Urges people filing for unemployment to file online if possible

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**(Madison)**—With the overwhelming number of people applying for unemployment benefits, State Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) urged workers to file online if possible. Last week more than 1.5 million calls were made to the Unemployment Insurance Division, an increase of 6,208% over last year's busiest weekly call volume. On one day alone last week the division received as many as 160 calls per second.

“As you can imagine the sheer number of people trying to apply for benefits is overwhelming a system that was not designed to handle so many applicants over such a short period of time,” said Hansen. “Everyone who is able should apply for their benefits online. That will free up the phone system to take calls from people who are unable to file online or who have to call in to verify information needed to complete their claims.”

Workers filing for benefits should file online at <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/uiben/apply/> .

The department is taking steps to make the process easier and to make sure people get all of their earned benefits by:

- “Modified policies and programming to allow claimants to back-date initial claims on the internet two weeks without creating an issue. Previously, they were required to do this within the first week.
- “Modified policies and programming to allow claimants up to 28 days to complete an initial application. Previously, if a claimant started an initial application and was directed to contact us or and got stuck and needed assistance, they had only 14 days to do so before the system would erase their information.” (Source: DWD)

Other changes will take time to be reflected in people’s filing experiences including increasing the number of employees to help in the call center and to help people who are unable to file online.

For example, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UI call center consisted of 57 employees. Since that time another 35 employees have been reassigned to the call center and another 40 were trained to answer phones, help with general inquiries, and take initial and weekly claims from people unable to use the internet. The department is also identifying 80 additional staff from other state agencies and looking to hire 36 claim specialists.

“These changes will make it faster and easier for people to file claims, but it will unfortunately take some time. As difficult as this is, I urge people to be patient and keep trying-but to please file online if you can and if you find yourself in need of assistance to contact my office. Together we can get through this extremely difficult and challenging time.”