

Sen. Wirch: Constituents services more important than ever during pandemic

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Serving my constituents is the most important part of my job as State Senator during the best of times. In difficult times like we are currently facing, that service becomes even more critical.

While we have been working remotely, my staff and I have maintained normal business operations. Calls to the office line often begin early in the morning and last late into the evening. Not surprisingly, a majority of the calls deal with unemployment benefits. The pandemic has caused many people to apply for unemployment insurance (UI) for the first time, and the process can be difficult and confusing. Some claims need a little extra information to be processed, and the massive influx of both online claims and calls to the UI division have at times overloaded the system; in these cases, we are able to help file a claim or arrange for a claimant to get a call back from a specialist.

Other frequent topics for calls include the federal stimulus payments and federal small business assistance. While we can't claim to be experts in these federal programs, we are always willing to track down an answer or make sure a constituent has access to the information they need.

There are times when we are simply a listening ear or a reassuring voice to someone who is scared or lonely. Constituents call in tears because they aren't sure they'll be able to pay their bills or because they aren't able to see their grandchildren or a loved one who may be ill. During this time of isolation and social distancing, the willingness to just listen or offer a kind word can make all the difference.

We're also busy providing the latest news and relevant information to keep constituents informed. Press releases, website updates and a weekly "News You Can Use-COVID-19" email have allowed me to share news, medical information, scam alerts, options for education and entertainment while at home, and more.

My staff and I are committed to providing help, however we can. If you need assistance, please contact me at (608)267-8979 or sen.wirch@legis.wisconsin.gov.

Senator Wirch represents Wisconsin's 22nd Senate District, which includes the City of Kenosha, most of the City of Racine, and parts of Somers, Mount Pleasant, and Elmwood Park.