

WisGOP: ICYMI - state audit reveals DWD dysfunction on handling unemployment appeals

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[Madison, WI] – In case you missed it, a new semiannual report from the Legislative Audit Bureau has quantified the failure of Tony Evers' Department of Workforce Development to move unemployment insurance cases through the appeals process. According to the [report](#), only 10 percent of unemployment insurance claims appeals were decided within a month, and less than 20 percent were decided within 45 days — despite the Evers administration's misleading statements that they had “cleared the backlog” while thousands of Wisconsinites waited for their claims to be adjudicated.

Not only has Tony Evers refused to lead on managing the rise of unemployment claims after he shut down the state economy, but this report comes as Evers is refusing transparency and [ignoring requests](#) from Wisconsin elected officials seeking information on how many taxpayer dollars have been wasted over fraudulent claims.

This is the second report that has outlined the extent of the Evers administration's mismanagement of the DWD. A UW-Madison [study](#) found that Wisconsin stood among the worst states in handling unemployment claims during the height of the pandemic. Try as he might to hide his failures, Wisconsinites know that Tony Evers has failed to lead and remains asleep at the wheel.

Read more from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [below](#):

Wisconsin, other states failed to meet federal rules for clearing unemployment appeals, a new report says

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#)

Laura Schulte and Hope Karnopp

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The state Department of Workforce Development failed to comply with federal regulations regarding unemployment appeals between June 2020 and May 2021, meaning that less than 80% of appeals were resolved in 45 days, according to a report from the Legislative Audit Bureau.

DWD, like its counterpart agencies in many other states, was far below that percentage in the time frame, hitting less than 20% between December 2020 and May 2021, according to the report issued Friday.

Overall, the Audit Bureau received 30 hotline reports regarding unemployment since Jan. 1, raising concerns over payment delays, call center effectiveness and appeal timeliness, according to documents.

One example named in the report cited an individual who filed an appeal in September 2020 and didn't receive a hearing until March, 26½ weeks after the appeal was requested. After the hearing, which overturned a denial of benefits, the department didn't deliver benefits to the applicant until May, more than six weeks after the hearing.

The department has a backlog of 13,282 appeals awaiting scheduling as of July 24, the latest data available from the department. More than 4,400 appeals have already been scheduled for a hearing. The average age of appeals filed that are awaiting a hearing is 58 days, nearly two weeks more than the number of days allowed by federal regulations.

[...]

Appeals aren't the only issue facing the department, even as unemployment numbers have begun to recede as people get vaccinated.

The bureau report also notes that the department struggled to implement the federal unemployment packages, often taking months to get the benefit applications online and operational.

Another failure pointed out in the report was the department's struggle to detect and prevent overpayments. The bureau recommends the department complete

outstanding reviews to see if payments were correctly handed out and establish overpayment amounts. The bureau also asked for a report on overpayments for September.

Wisconsin's unemployment system has been plagued with issues since the start of the coronavirus pandemic last year.

First, the wave of applications as businesses shuttered overwhelmed the department's outdated unemployment system, sometimes forcing applicants to wait months to have an adjudicator look at their case. As the cases flooded in, so did calls with questions, too. But the department wasn't prepared to handle those either, resulting in claimants waiting for hours on hold, many times only for the call to be dropped or go unanswered.

[...]

In June, DWD officials said they believed more than \$1 million may have been paid in fraudulent unemployment benefits and said they were working with the inspector general. Assembly Speaker Robin Vos has also said he wants the state to do more to audit work search requirements.

On Tuesday, Republicans failed in their attempt to override Evers' veto of a bill that would have ended the state's participation in the federal unemployment programs that are set to expire in September.