

# WisGOP: Two years later, Evers' DWD still fails the unemployed

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[Madison, WI] – Tony Evers failed to meet the moment during the height of the pandemic, and the repercussions are still ongoing. [According](#) to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Research on the Wisconsin Economy, in February 2022 “nearly seven percent of first unemployment payments were delayed more than eight weeks,” despite low unemployment.

This follows more than two years of failure by Tony Evers' Department of Workforce Development to deliver unemployed Wisconsinites the benefits they were promised. At one point, [100,000](#) Wisconsinites were stuck in the backlog of claims – all while Evers refused transparency and [ignored requests](#) for information from state elected officials.

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## **DWD Still Failing the Unemployed**

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In April 2020, a flood of unemployment claims exposed the incompetence and dysfunction in Gov. Tony Evers' Department of Workforce Development. Two years later, DWD still is lagging far behind in paying claims — despite record-low unemployment.

“In February 2022 nearly 7% of first unemployment payments were delayed more than 8 weeks. Delays are still elevated at a time when UI claims have fallen below pre-pandemic levels,” Noah Williams, founding director of the Center for Research

on the Wisconsin Economy (CROWE) recently reported.

While 7 percent is a marked improvement from the 50 percent during DWD's debacle in 2020, and the 25 percent claims-processing delays of eight weeks-plus for much of 2021, the rate is a miserable failure compared to low or average unemployment times over the past decade.

Williams' review shows delays of more than two months were lower than 1 percent, often much lower than that, during Gov. Scott Walker's tenure.

The Evers administration blamed antiquated technology and historic unemployment claims during the first year and a half of the pandemic for massive backlogs. But last week the agency posted 4,650 initial unemployment claims, three times less than the 16,463 first-time claims filed the same week a year ago. DWD saw 29,418 regular weekly claims last week compared to 92,683 claims during the same period in 2021.

Things were much worse in 2020. Wisconsin lost 439,400 total non-farm jobs from March 2020 to April 2020 as the pandemic hit. Many of those "lost" jobs were workers forced to the unemployment line by Evers' lockdown orders. The state's jobless rate was 14.1 percent in April 2020, up from 3.1 percent just the month before.

In September, the governor finally realized he had billions of dollars in federal COVID relief aid to use at his sole discretion. He announced a plan to target \$80 million to update DWD's integrated technology system, doing what lawmakers had told him to do months before. It's not clear where that project is today.

So why the lengthy delays in paying unemployment claims these days? Because DWD's problems run much deeper than the technology it employs.