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Assembly Republicans Direct Evers to Address Broken UI System

MADISON – After months of inactivity from Governor Evers to address his administration’s unemployment insurance system that left hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin families without crucial benefits in the middle of a pandemic, State Representative Jim Steineke (R-Kaukauna) voted today to force Governor Evers’ hand in modernizing the Department of Workforce Development’s IT system. The Assembly convened in special session this afternoon, approving a bill that first and foremost requires DWD to initiate the update and issue a request for proposal within 30 days of the bill’s effective date.

“For months, we’ve asked the Governor to use the resources at his disposal to get this process started, and for months, his fear of political responsibility has hurt Wisconsin families,” said Rep. Steineke. “Sadly, it’s become clear that Governor Evers will never step up and be accountable to Wisconsinites, so Assembly Republicans are stepping in to do his job for him.”

In addition to directing the Governor to begin the updating process for the UI computer system, the legislation also includes bipartisan initiatives from the Coronavirus Relief Bill that Governor Evers vetoed earlier this year. Common sense items like exempting the UI one-week waiting period through March 14 and extending benefits provisions were struck down by the Governor.

“While we can’t force the Governor to address his administration’s inaction when it comes to UI – what several nonpartisan audits found to be the main culprit for extended wait times – we can give him a roadmap to replace the computer system,” continued Rep. Steineke. “I’m disappointed that Governor Evers continues to pass blame instead of taking action, but as always, Assembly Republicans are fighting for Wisconsin families.”

Today’s vote comes after months of failures by Governor Evers and his Department of Workforce Development:

- A backlog that surpassed 700,000 unemployment claims during the pandemic;
- 38.3 million unanswered phone calls from hurting Wisconsinites, only 1% of calls answered;
- Firing of DWD Secretary Frostman for his mishandling of the UI system;
- Governor Evers saying he has [no new answers for those waiting on unemployment](#).

The special session bill received bipartisan support from both the state Assembly and Senate, and now heads to the Governor for his signature.

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