



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 18, 2021

**Contact:** Meghan Sovey  
Meghan.Sovey@legis.wi.gov  
608-266-8546

**SEN. SMITH’S STATEMENT ON THE WORK LEFT UNDONE  
FOR UI SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

MADISON – Today the Wisconsin State Senate voted on Special Session Senate Bill 1 to begin improving Wisconsin’s outdated unemployment insurance system. This bill makes technical changes to the unemployment insurance (UI) system and suspends the one-week waiting period until March.

Republicans rejected amendments introduced by Senator Jeff Smith (D – Brunswick) and his Democratic colleagues to appropriate nearly \$80 million to the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) for improving the UI system. Amendments to fix the problems with Wisconsin’s one-week waiting period were also rejected, despite already losing \$25 million in federal funding in 2020.

Senator Smith voted in favor of Special Session Senate Bill 1 and released the following statement in response:

“This bill will help us begin to fix some of the unemployment insurance system’s most pressing issues. Unemployed workers have waited months for this 60-year old system to generate payments. It’s encouraging to see Republicans acknowledge the problem, but why make workers wait? Decades of inaction to fix the system and mean-spirited policy changes created overly burdensome regulations that prevent people from getting paid. This bill is a baby step when workers need a leap for improving unemployment insurance.

“There’s more work to do for getting ahead of the system’s issues. This bill is like a piece of tape fixing a leaking pipe. It’s not feasible to keep covering the problem with quick fixes. We must make investments for the long term and overhaul the system entirely.

“Governor Evers’ budget will modernize the unemployment insurance system to a place where it needs to be. It’s time we rollback Republicans’ harmful policies and create a reliable and efficient system for Wisconsinites.”

###

*The 31st Senate District includes all of Buffalo and Pepin counties and portions of Trempealeau, Pierce, Dunn, Eau Claire and Jackson counties and very small portions of Chippewa and St. Croix counties.*