



# Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

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## **FOUR TO FIVE WEEK WAIT ON UNEMPLOYMENT CALL BACKS**

More than One in Four Unemployment Claims Unpaid

MADISON – The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) told the Legislature today that constituent contacts for unemployment will not be responded to for “approximately 4 to 5 weeks in most cases.” (*emphasis in original*) In addition, according to data provided by DWD more than 1 in 4 (approximately 860,000) unemployment (UI) claims have gone unpaid.

“What the hell is going on over there?” asked Senator Van Wanggaard (R-Racine). “They’ve had three months to fix this problem. They’ve added hundreds of workers. The more people they add, the worse the situation is getting. It’s completely unacceptable.”

“People needed UI help months ago, not a month from now,” added Wanggaard. “Initial claims are decreasing, the UI surge has ebbed. I know DWD was overwhelmed at the beginning of this pandemic. That was understandable. But it’s been three months. It should be getting better, but it’s worse than ever.”

DWD reported to the Legislature on Tuesday that they added “several adjudicators and an additional support person to the UI team processing [legislative] constituent inquiry claims.” (*emphasis added*) The four to five week backlog comes despite the fact that DWD has hired 200 more unemployment call center employees, with an additional 300 employees processing and adjudicating UI claims by the end of June.

At the Senate Labor Committee hearing at end of May, DWD gave the impression they were fully aware of the scope of the unemployment problems, and that it had a plan to alleviate the backlog and help people in need. Three weeks later, the same problems at DWD still exist, and the situation for unemployed workers is even more bleak.

“My office has tried to help hundreds of people receive the unemployment benefits they earned. I know other legislators have helped thousands more. The roadblock is at DWD,” Wanggaard said. “This goes way beyond an old computer program. This is pathetic management and leadership. I wouldn’t tolerate it among my staff and I don’t think anyone else would either. Someone in the Administration needs to take ownership of this, and get this corrected yesterday. Governor Evers needs to get this fixed.”

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The full legislative update from the Department of Workforce Development can be found on Senator Wanggaard’s website here: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/21/wanggaard/media/1290/june-dwd-update.pdf>

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