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Gov. Sisolak announces updates to help Nevadans file for Unemployment Insurance

Carson City, NV — Today, Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak announced he is instructing the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation to backdate all Unemployment Insurance claims to the earliest date of eligibility to help thousands of Nevadans gain easier access to unemployment insurance benefits.

Nevadans that have been unable to file a claim due to the unprecedented volume will not lose any benefits as a result of the overwhelming surge in demand.

"Whenever your application was submitted, you will be paid retroactively and there's no more action you need to take for this to go through if you have already filed your initial claim," **said Gov. Sisolak.** "For individuals filing for unemployment, this is great news, and will provide Nevadans out of work more money in their pockets to pay their bills and start the road to recovery. "

Governor Sisolak also announced that Nevada is among the early states in the country that will be dispersing the additional $600 from the federal CARES Act to everyone who is currently receiving unemployment benefits.

These payments will be backdated as well. Some may begin to see this payment as early as tomorrow, and staggered payments will continue to go throughout the week.

Please see below for a copy of Governor Sisolak's prepared remarks about Unemployment Insurance:

Now, I want to change gears and address a topic that's been on a lot of Nevadan's minds, and that is filing for unemployment benefits.

This unprecedent pandemic has been devastating for so many of our families. My office has heard from many Nevadans who have lost their livelihoods and are experiencing issues filing for their unemployment benefits.

To understand the full scope of what our state is experiencing, I want to share some context:

More than 300,000 of our fellow Nevadans have applied for unemployment benefits over the last 30 days. That's one in every ten Nevadans.

In the weeks between March 14th and April 4th, Nevada saw the three highest numbers of initial weekly unemployment insurance claims on record for our state.

In the week ending on April 4th, over 79,000 Nevadans filed initial unemployment insurance claims. That is nearly nine times as many initial weekly claims as the highest week in the Great Recession, which was 8,900 in January 2009.

In all of 2009, over 329,000 Nevadans filed initial unemployment claims—we're already approaching that number for 2020 and it is only April 14th. We've already surpassed the total number of weekly initial claims filed in every other year during the Great Recession. In 2008, there were 250,000 claims and in 2010, there were 260,000.

I say all this to demonstrate the magnitude of what we are facing right now. And we're not alone.

All across the country, states are facing record-breaking job losses and unemployment claims. Nevada joins the ranks of Hawaii, Michigan, Georgia, Kentucky, and Rhode Island for highest claims per 1,000 workers.

I know it has not been easy and I want to let you know that I am listening to your concerns.

My office has been fielding calls and emails from Nevadans across the state, and my office brings me these messages every night. I want to share some examples of what Nevadans who have reached out to us have said.

Many have said they can't get through on the phones, even after calling all day.

Others have expressed frustration with password resets.

Folks have told my office that the website is too slow to file.

These are real concerns and I hear them.

I know this is hard. I get your frustration, too. I remember when my Dad was laid off from his job and what that meant to our family. Every night, I think about this.

We've brought in some experts to look at our system, and the analysis showed what we expected to be true: the system was never set up to handle this volume of calls and claims. If I could wave a wand tomorrow and start this system over from scratch I would.

But unfortunately, that analysis also showed that a complete overhaul at this time would prohibit Nevadans from filing for an extended period of time, and would do more harm than good. We continue to explore these options in the hope we can find something that works.

The reality is this: during the good times, no one can ever imagine it being bad again -- certainly not as bad as this. As a result, attempts to upgrade the unemployment insurance system or increase staffing or even maintain staffing levels were not approved in the past.

But it doesn't help anyone to solely look into the past -- I've been committed to trying to find solutions for right now to make up for a previously unimaginable surge in claims and a division that didn't get the support it needed.

Luckily, we have some updates and good news to share with Nevadans tonight.

For those Nevadans that have been unable to file a claim due to the unprecedented volume: you will not lose any benefits as a result of the overwhelming surge in demand.

That's because today, I instructed DETR to backdate all unemployment claims to the earliest date of eligibility, back to March 15, 2020. Whenever your application was submitted, you will be paid retroactively and there's no more action you need to take for this to go through if you have already filed your initial claim. For individuals filing for unemployment, this is great news, and will provide Nevadans out of work more money in their pockets to pay their bills and start the road to recovery.

Volume continues to impact the system, but benefit payments will not be reduced because of application issues.

Finally, I want to give some important updates as it relates to the CARES Act.

I am proud to announce that Nevada is among the early states in the country that will be dispersing the additional $600 to EVERYONE who is currently receiving unemployment benefits.

These payments will be backdated as well. Some of you may begin to see this payment as early as tomorrow, and staggered payments will continue to go throughout the week.

Believe me, we are working around the clock to solve these issues and to provide assistance to those Nevadans that need these programs right now.

In addition to the overview I just provided, I know many of you probably still have more questions. So, I've invited Kimberly Gaa from DETR to join me today to answer several questions that both of our offices have received.

Given that she is the subject matter expert, she can provide in-depth answers to these questions so that everyone can stay informed with the facts, learn more about the entire process, and know what your options are.

Thank you for joining me Kimberly.

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