Nebraska to Apply for Lost Wage Assistance Funds

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September 4, 2020

Limited Program will be Retroactive & for Claimants Receiving at Least $100 Per Week

LINCOLN - The Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) announced today that Nebraska will apply for the federal Lost Wages Supplemental Payment Assistance program (LWA). If the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approves the funding request, the state will pay an additional $300 in weekly unemployment benefits for a limited number of weeks covered by the program.

Per federal guidance, the $300 payments will be limited to qualified claimants for the weeks ending August 1, August 8 and August 15, with additional weeks covered only if funding is available. Unlike the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation Program (FPUC) that ended in July, LWA is a grant with a finite amount of funding. When the federal program exhausts its grant funding, it will no longer have the resources to provide LWA payments and the program will end at that time.

Only people whose unemployment is COVID-related will be eligible for LWA payments, under terms of the memorandum the President issued on Aug. 8. Additionally, the program excludes those receiving less than $100 in weekly unemployment benefits. LWA payments apply to eligible individuals in all benefit programs, including regular state unemployment benefits, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) and Extended Benefits (EB).

“The Lost Wage Assistance Program provides very limited benefits to a portion of Nebraska’s unemployment recipients and has an uncertain end date,” said Commissioner of Labor John H. Albin. “NDOL is awaiting critical guidance from FEMA that will allow the agency to finalize a path forward in covering the

administrative costs of paying LWA benefits. Consequently, the timeline for issuing payments is also uncertain."

Eligible PUA recipients will not need to take any action to receive the additional payments. Individuals falling under other benefit programs will need to certify their eligibility in NEworks.nebraska.gov. Further instructions will be issued directly to those claimants.

The state's maximum weekly benefit amount is $440 for claimants falling under both state and federal benefit programs. When combined with the new program, the maximum possible benefit in Nebraska will be $740 per week for the covered weeks, before federal withholding taxes.

In anticipation of FEMA approval, NDOL has already begun working with its vendor to build a new program within the unemployment system to implement and pay LWA benefits. The program will be ready for deployment pending federal guidance.

NDOL has paid unemployment benefits to over 130,000 individuals throughout the pandemic.

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