



Pennsylvania Conference of Teamsters

Strength in Numbers 95,000

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

PA Representative Pat Harkins (former UPS Teamster) Explains “Federal CARES Act”

“This is a simple, concise explanation that I just used on a statewide radio program.”

The federal CARES Act passed on March 27, 2020, and provides for the following:

- An additional \$600 per week on top of the weekly benefit a claimant receives from eligible UC programs.
- Expanded benefits for unemployed individuals who are traditionally not eligible for UC benefits.
 - o This includes the self-employed, independent contractors, and gig economy workers.
- 13 weeks of extended benefits for claimants who have exhausted their initial eligibility.
 - o UC claimants are now eligible for up to 39 weeks of total benefits.
- The PA Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) has also waived job search and work registration requirements, in addition to the traditional waiting week before claimants can file for benefits.

\$600 Benefit (Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation)

- L&I began sending out \$600 checks last Friday and they will begin arriving later this week.
- The benefits will be paid out starting with the week ending April 4, 2020, and will continue to be paid out through the week ending July 25, 2020.
- Eligible claimants will NOT need to apply separately for this benefit.
 - o All eligible claimants that filed a biweekly claim for the week ending April 4 and who received their regular UC payment should expect to see their money later this week.
 - o Other eligible claimants who have not yet received a regular UC payment, will receive the extra \$600 the week after receiving their first UC payment.

Benefits for the Self-Employed, Independent Contractors, and Gig Workers (Pandemic Unemployment Assistance)

- Claimants are not yet able to apply for these benefits, but L&I estimates that application will be available within the next 2 weeks.
- Eligible claimants will receive payments backdated to whichever is later:
 - o January 27, 2020; or
 - o The first week they were unable to work due to COVID-19.
- The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefit will end December 31, 2020.
- Individuals who think they will be eligible should continue to check L&I's unemployment compensation website for updates on when and how they can apply.
- The U.S. Department of Labor requires that PUA be tracked separately from regular UC. For this reason, Pennsylvania must build a new online platform to process PUA benefits.
- Contrary to some misinformation that's out there, as of last Friday, no surrounding state has implemented UC benefits for the self-employed, gig workers, or independent contractors.
 - o NY and a couple other states (NJ and VA) are encouraging those individuals to apply. However, they must be rejected for normal UC benefits first before they will be eligible for benefits under the CARES Act.
 - Pennsylvania is working to cut out that step by creating a separate application for these claimants.
- Note: as of Friday, the only state we're aware of that is actually paying out PUA benefits is Rhode Island, which is one of the least populated states in the country.

Extended Benefits (Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation)

- L&I is awaiting additional guidance from the federal government before implementing extended benefits for claimants who have exhausted their benefits eligibility.
 - o These claimants are not yet able to apply for extended benefits.
- Claimants will be eligible for extended benefits from the week beginning March 29, 2020, through the end of the year.
- These claimants should continue to monitor L&I's unemployment compensation website for updates on when and how they can apply.

Progress Implementing Changes

- L&I is working day and night to implement these changes to the UC system as quickly as possible, in addition to processing an unprecedented number of traditional UC claims.
 - o Since March 15, 2020, more than 1.3 million unemployment claims have been filed in Pennsylvania, with as many as 90,000 claims being filed in a single day.
 - o So far, the department has paid out more than half the claims that have been filed since this crisis began, distributing more than \$500 million of benefits.