



# John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance**

May 14, 2020

Caleb Frostman, Secretary  
Department of Workforce Development  
201 E. Washington Ave  
PO Box 7946  
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Secretary Frostman,

Thank you for your quick reply to our suggestions on ways to speed up the processing of Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims. I wish that my constituents were able to contact the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) as easily and receive a response on their pending UI claims as quickly.

I understand and appreciate that the federal government has laws in place to protect the integrity of UI programs. These are important protections for claimants, businesses, and taxpayers. Has Governor Evers or DWD requested flexibility from the federal government to implement innovative methods to speed up the processing of claims? It is my understanding that the federal government is providing greater levels of flexibility to states during this unprecedented time.

In the vein of being helpful, I would like to offer more innovative ways DWD should be working to speed up the processing of UI claims.

A constituent recently called me in tears because she is unable to contact anyone at the DWD call center and she told me that the call center closes at 3:30pm. A check of DWD's website shows that the call centers at DWD are only open from 7:35am until 3:30pm Monday through Friday.

DWD should immediately extend call center hours to speed up the processing of UI claims. While it may be unreasonable to have a call center open for 24 hours - I understand the need to close the call center for administrative and IT purposes – it seems unreasonable, with an unprecedented level of UI claims, that DWD has not extended call center hours.

Given the flexibility to hire additional staff, transfer state employees to DWD, and the 140 vacancies in the UI Division, there is no reason the call centers cannot be open at least 16 hours a day, seven days a week. I know you share my concern about the backlog of UI claims, so this should be an easy change to implement. In fact, other states including California, Michigan, North Carolina, and Texas have already extended call center hours.



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On Friday, Governor Evers' administration announced an emergency rule change that would allow certain Limited-Term Employees (LTEs) to collect full pay while not working during the COVID-19 pandemic. I ask you to request Governor Evers use his authority in Act 185 to transfer LTEs that are being paid for not working to DWD to help process UI claims. It is insulting to unemployed Wisconsinites that Governor Evers and his administration are prioritizing state employees who are not working over the processing of UI claims.

I strongly urge you to take these two actions immediately. I believe they will make significant progress to speeding up the processing of UI claims.

Again, thank you for your service. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

John Nygren  
State Representative  
Assembly District 89