



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR
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Republicans Knew of Problems with Unemployment Processing Since 2014 and Did Nothing

(Madison)—State Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) said Republicans knew of the state’s unemployment system’s inability to handle large numbers of applications but did nothing to fix the problem.

According to an audit conducted by the state’s non-partisan Legislative Audit Bureau in fiscal year 2013-2014 1.7 million calls, or 60.2% were blocked. “From December 2013 through January 2014, more than 80.0 percent of the 836,700 calls to the telephone line for initial claims were blocked.”

“Since the audit Republicans have known about the problems with and limitations of the unemployment insurance system but did little to nothing to fix it. For them to now be trying to place the blame on our Governor and Secretary Frostman for the difficulties caused in large part by their lack of concern for the unemployed is hypocritical and disingenuous,” said Hansen.

The state has seen over 550,000 new applications for unemployment in the span of weeks due to the coronavirus pandemic. Because of changes Republicans made to the law to make it more difficult to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits and their cuts to state agencies under Scott Walker the process for many unemployed workers can be complicated and time consuming. The process has been made more time consuming and difficult by the Trump administration’s demand that states fully vet every application prior to issuing any benefits.

In order to keep up with the avalanche of applications the agency hired 1,300 new staff to process and investigate applications, added a new call center and expanded the department’s hours of operations to seven days a week and extended hours on weekdays.

“Governor Evers and Secretary Frostman and all the people at Workforce Development are doing yeoman’s work trying to get everyone the benefits they need and deserve. But no one is helped by all of this Republican sniping and faux concern for workers history has shown they do not care about.”

“If they truly want to help they should work with our Governor to solve this problem instead of trying to use it for their own political gain.”

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