



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

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UNEMPLOYMENT AUDIT SHOWS SHOCKING INEPTNESS

Less Than 1% of Calls Answered, DWD Slow to Respond

MADISON – Senator Van Wanggaard (R-Racine) expressed shock and disbelief at the results of a Legislative Audit into Wisconsin’s unemployment backlog. The audit, which only addressed the Unemployment Insurance (UI) call center, showed that less than 1% of phone calls were answered, that the situation didn’t improve for months, and DWD took slow and limited steps to alleviate the problem.

“Unfortunately, this is both completely believable given what everyone experienced, and unbelievable that it was this bad,” said Wanggaard. “I don’t fault them for being caught shorthanded at the beginning, but the lack of steps to improve the situation is unforgivable.”

In addition to discovering that only 0.5% of calls to UI were completed, the audit also showed more than 95% of calls were unanswered for more than two months. Despite the near-constant busy signal, it took DWD two months to add just 41 staff to answer the crush of phone calls. You can read a full copy of the audit on the Legislative Audit Bureau website:

<https://legis.wisconsin.gov/lab/media/3078/20-13full.pdf> .

“Calls increased by 1400% the week before the safer at home order, and then skyrocketed another 400%,” said Wanggaard. “You would have thought that this would be an alarm bell to anyone paying attention. But it took months for DWD to increase staff by 41 people. What took so long, and what logic says 41 people can handle millions of phone calls? What was Governor Evers thinking? How did he not address this situation sooner? The mismanagement is mindboggling.”

This is the second audit in the last three months showing the mishandling of unemployment claims by the Evers Administration. As of last week, more than 10% of UI claims, representing almost 100,000 claimants have not been addressed. To date, there has been no change in leadership at the Unemployment Insurance Division. Senator Wanggaard is the vice-chair of the Senate Committee on Labor & Regulatory Reform.

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