

From State Representative Tom Bennett:

Legislators get answers on unemployment

Last week dozens of legislators participated in a briefing from the Illinois Department of Employment Security to discuss the unacceptable delays in processing of unemployment claims for Illinoisans hit hard by the coronavirus-related shutdowns. IDES shared details with us on some rules that have been temporarily waived and on what steps are being taken to help get these benefits to those who need them.

Among the changes which were made to ease applications, IDES no longer requires applicants to show that they are actively looking for work, since that is extremely difficult under these conditions. The applicant just needs to demonstrate that they are “ready to return to work.” IDES also no longer considers Social Security disability benefits to be disqualifying income which influence the benefits available to a part-time worker.

IDES received 553,270 unemployment claims between mid-March and early April, constituting 9.1% of employed persons in Illinois. The agency updated us on the steps it is taking to meet this unprecedented demand, including having their staff work at full capacity and getting technology support from the Department of Innovation and Technology (DOIT) to upgrade their systems. We will continue to closely monitor this system as IDES must do all it can to help those who have lost their jobs.

Those in need of unemployment assistance can call the IDES helpline at 1-800-244-5631 or visit ides.illinois.gov.

Help available for utilities, mortgages and student loans

COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown has caused economic hardship for many Illinoisans. If you are facing tough economic times please know you are not alone and there are programs out there to help. [Click here](#) for a list of some of the programs available to help with utilities, mortgages and student loans.