

Iowa Workforce Monthly



Analysis Shows Severe Hardship if Recovery Act Unemployment Provisions Expire

IWD Deputy Director Joseph Walsh Joins in Calling on Congress to Swiftly Renew Unemployment & COBRA Benefits

The National Employment Law Project (NELP), the Center for American Progress Action Fund and the Half in Ten Campaign released a report detailing the severe economic and human costs by state if key provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) are not renewed. Scheduled to expire at the end of the year, millions of workers would become ineligible for unemployment and COBRA benefits. The groups were joined by state labor commissioners from across the country, as well as labor and civil rights leaders, in calling on Congress to renew the ARRA's provisions swiftly by the end of the year.

"The unemployment crisis will not disappear simply because we move into 2010," stated Deputy Director Walsh. "Without an immediate extension of ARRA benefits, thousands of Iowans will lose benefits during the first quarter of 2010."

Over 10,000 Iowans will exhaust their regular state unemployment benefits during the first quarter of 2010. Without a deadline extension, these individuals will not receive any of the federal unemployment benefit extensions. An additional 20,000 will exhaust a portion of the three tiers of federal extensions and will not be allowed to continue in the program.

Keeping the First Line of Defense for the Jobless was presented at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. and provides national and state-by-state impacts should key ARRA unemployment and health provisions expire this year.

- One million workers will be left unemployed in January with no access to benefits.
- The state agencies that process unemployment benefits, which have already been overwhelmed by the record volume of claims, will have to notify all recipients of an interruption in federally-funded benefits and adapt to new benefits programming and major processing delays.
- Failure to reauthorize and expand the 65% COBRA subsidy could result in nearly half of those now enrolled in the COBRA program becoming uninsured and exposed to even more serious financial hardship should they suffer even a minor health problem requiring medical care.

The Labor Commissioners of Kansas, Maine, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Washington traveled to Washington, D.C., along with state agency officials from Arizona, Iowa and New York, to share first-hand the urgency of renewing the federal jobless provisions.

Highlights:

- During 2009, IWD staff members participated in a 5-day Kaizen event designed to streamline the collection of employers' delinquent unemployment insurance (UI) taxes.....pg. 2
- Beginning January 15, the Iowa Department of Revenue web site will feature links to companies that provide online filing of both federal and Iowa income tax returns.....pg. 2
- Recently, OSHA Inspectors Lonnie Majerus and Don Peddy visited Hannah, Inc. in Sioux City.....pg. 2
- Looking for a new job when you are over the age of 50 poses a whole new set of challenges.....pg. 3
- Over the last year, IWD has been working on an Integration Project that will change the way services are delivered to customers.....pg. 3

Inside this Issue:

- Director's Message.....pg. 2
- Employee Anniversaries.....pg. 4
- Employee Retirements.....pg. 4
- Employee Acknowledgements.....pg. 4



One On One



with Elisabeth Buck, IWD Director

Another year is almost over. I'm looking forward to the next year and realize there is still a lot of hard work that needs to be done. We will hit the ground running in January when the legislature begins its general session.

Below, you can read about a Kaizen event that was held earlier this year. Kaizen is a strategic methodology that we are using to streamline our processes to make them

more efficient. You can read about the positive results in the UI Tax Collections unit.

We have also included job hunting tips for the Baby Boomer generation. It can sometimes be difficult to be looking for a new job if you're over age 50. We included some common questions that you may be asked and suggestions for how to navigate them successfully.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter.

We hope you'll find the information we provide beneficial. As we approach the holiday season, IWD would like to wish everyone "Happy Holidays" and a safe, happy 2010!

UI Tax Collections Unit Kaizen Event Success

During 2009, IWD staff members participated in a 5-day Kaizen event designed to streamline the collection of employers' delinquent unemployment insurance (UI) taxes. The event resulted in significantly more outstanding unemployment insurance taxes collected and increased penalties recovered from that debt.

The power of the Kaizen method for streamlining and designing a more optimal workflow is that at the end of the week the new process has been designed, the implementation phase has begun and the improvements can be estimated or measured.

The time-wasting part of the typical change initiative that drags on for weeks and months — analyzing the problem, identifying root causes, developing and implementing solutions — is condensed into a very short time span.

The major beneficiaries of improving delinquent tax collection activities are employers who pay their unemployment taxes on time. The collection of unemployment taxes increases the balance of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund.

This Kaizen event changed the culture of the UI Tax Collections Unit and the greater UI Tax

Bureau so that now they have held four independent process mapping sessions for other processes. This effort displays significant initiative in using Kaizen methodology.

The Kaizen team members took the call for innovation and creativity seriously by focusing on business process improvements with the only requested expenditure being the acquisition of a printer. As a result of their process improvement, they will roughly quadruple the amount of distress warrants issued and triple the amount of resulting revenue from 2008 to 2009.

E-file Tax Returns for Fast Refund

Beginning January 15, the Iowa Department of Revenue web site will feature links to companies that provide online filing of both federal and Iowa income tax returns. Click the e-file logo at www.state.ia.us/tax to find two categories of electronic filing: "eFile for Free" or "eFile for a Fee." Those who do not qualify to file free will discover that online filing is not expensive.

Most filers receive refunds and want them fast. To get your refund in 10 days or less, electronically file through the Department's web site, purchased software or tax professionals. Last year 74% of Iowa returns were e-filed. If your cause is green, you should know that e-filing is good for the environment.

Little, if any, paper is used or stored by e-filers and the Department.

Thank You's come in surprising ways

Recently, OSHA Inspectors Lonnie Majerus and Don Peddy visited Hannah, Inc. in Sioux City. Some fines were given for things that needed fixed.

Surprisingly, when the payment for those fines was sent in, we received a thank you note from the company.

"Thank you so much for all your assistance in this matter. I have learned so much. It is greatly appreciated. Keep up your good work."

It is nice to know that even when doing your job means issuing fines or other unpleasant duties, that it can be appreciated and viewed as a learning opportunity.

Job Hunting Tips for Baby Boomers

Looking for a new job when you are over the age of 50 poses a whole new set of challenges. Under the Federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act, discrimination against anyone over age 40 is illegal. Here are five of the most common age-related interview questions - and how to field them gracefully.

1. "Will you be using this job as a bridge to retirement?"

Reassure your interviewer that you are excited about the position and plan to continue working for a long time. If you're relatively young and look even younger, you may not need to address the issue at all.

2. What are your salary requirements?

When faced with this question, first respond with a cool noncommittal answer. If pressed, give a salary range based on your research. For example, say: "I've researched the salary range for this position in our area and have found the typical salary range to be from \$125,000 to \$175,000, plus bonus. Is this what you have in mind?"

3. "Do you have enough energy, stamina or brain power to do the job?"

This type of question is your cue to talk about your drive, energy and enthusiasm for the job. Give specific examples that reveal your energy using the STAR technique, where you describe the Situation,

Task, Action and Result. Also keep in mind that this type of question reveals clues about the job's demands, hours, deadlines and overall expectations.

4. "Aren't you overqualified for the position?"

If the question does come up, emphasize your strengths and accomplishments, not the length of your experience. The interviewer may be concerned that you will have excessively high salary requirements or won't be a fit with the company culture. Remember to always stay positive and try to determine and address the real reason why the interviewer is asking the question.

5. "How old are you?"

This type of question is generally illegal, and you can graciously refuse to answer. Other tactics include responding with

humor, or addressing the question behind the question: "I am incredibly energetic and expect to be working for a long time." Whether or not you choose to reveal your age, always keep the atmosphere positive.

Here are a few other things to keep in mind:

- Stress examples of loyalty to your former companies to demonstrate your unwillingness to jump ship at the first available opportunity.
- Emphasize relevant experience - real accomplishments - that tells the prospective employer you will not have a long learning curve.
- Don't apologize or act defensive about being over 50. You can't have a defeatist attitude or it will show during the interview.

Ft. Dodge the latest office to Integrate Services

Over the last year, IWD has been working on an Integration Project that will change the way services are delivered to customers. The goal is to better assist customers by training staff in the following programs:

- Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser)
- WIA Adult & Dislocated Worker Services
- Trade Adjustment Act Services
- Veteran Services
- New Iowan Center
- Unemployment Insurance

This will allow offices to provide Iowa businesses with the skilled workers they need while workers gain and expand skills that are in demand.

On Nov. 20th, the Ft. Dodge Workforce Center was the fourth IWD office to become an Integrated One-Stop office.

Other integrated offices include Creston, Des Moines and Dubuque.

Other launch dates are:

- Council Bluffs on Dec. 18
- Newton office on Jan. 14



Noteworthy Employee Acknowledgements and Accomplishments

We appreciate the feedback we get from our customers. Here are a few noteworthy comments we've received:

- Steve Henry sent a note of thanks for the fabulous

Des Moines

Workforce Center staff members working for Iowans in a job transition. "They should be commended for their outreach, passion and genuine concern they exhibit with everyone who walk through your door." Way to go Des Moines!

- Debra from Fort Dodge called to pass along compliments to **Joyce Vanorstran**, Ft. Dodge.

"Joyce was very sympathetic to

my needs and offered support and comfort, and went above and beyond to research and help me with my claim - all without losing her patience." Good Job, Joyce.

- James Sacco sent in a note to thank the Customer Service Team - **Mary Conrath, Carmen Gomez, Carmella Shaw and Joy Milligan**. "I don't like being unemployed, as most people probably don't, but when I have a question and need to call in, I always get the best customer service. Every person I speak with treats me great and does not talk down to me, even though I

may not know exactly what to say. During these tough times, it is good to know when I call, I won't be treated poorly." Recently, the Customer Service team was given a Golden Dome Award for their service to all unemployed Iowans during these difficult times. Thank you Customer Service Team for all your hard work and dedication.

If you would like to send us your noteworthy comment, send it to:
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or 515-281-5407.

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For Deaf or Hard of Hearing, call Relay 711

Iowa Workforce Monthly is intended to help keep Iowa employers, job seekers and IWD employees informed about critical employment issues affecting Iowa. For more information, contact Kathryn Hommer via e-mail at kathryn.hommer@iwd.iowa.gov or 515-281-5407.

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Auxiliary aids and services are available to individuals with disabilities upon request.

Employee News

Promotions/Transfers

Barbara Buck
Jamie Cook
Keely Hartschen
Kelly Loftus
Amber Ramirez
Corey Stevens
Linda Terry
Mary Traywick
La-Tica Watson

Anniversaries

5 Years
Amy Herrig
Kasey Friedrichsen
Renaldo Ellis

Retirements

Duane Akeright

New Hires

Shannon Archer
Erin Asher
Brenda Boten
Jeffery Curran
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