

Governor Kelly issues Executive Order to help meet surging demand for unemployment benefits for workers affected by COVID-19

Mar 31, 2020

Today Governor Laura Kelly signed Executive Order 20-17 to ensure Kansas can draw down millions in federal dollars under the federal CARES Act.

The federal stimulus will expand unemployment insurance to include self-employed, 1099-independent contractors, gig and low-wage workers who can no longer work because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The agreement also increases weekly benefits for all unemployed workers by \$600 a week for up to four months.

“Certain provisions of Kansas employment security law will impede Kansas’ ability to draw down millions in federal funds for unemployment insurance programs,” Kelly said. “This order will allow flexibility to ensure Kansas workers and small business owners can secure the safety and protection that unemployment insurance is designed to provide at times of crisis.”

[Executive Order 20-17](#) makes three, temporary changes to Kansas employment security law:

- The waiting week requirement for unemployment benefits is temporarily waived for all claimants;
- The requirement that Kansans receiving unemployment benefits actively seek work each week is temporarily waived for all claimants to allow Kansans to continue the necessary social distancing practices;
- All Kansas employers, as required by the federal Department of Labor, must notify separated employees if they qualify for unemployment insurance.

“This flexibility will ensure that our Department of Labor can keep up with the surge of unemployment claims our state is experiencing and that Kansas workers and small business owners can secure the safety and protection that unemployment insurance is designed to provide at times of crisis,” Kelly said.

Kelly also addressed the unprecedented volume of calls coming into the Kansas Department of Labor. Just yesterday, the agency received over

877,000 calls to their unemployment line. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the agency received an average of 1,100 calls per week.

“Labor Secretary Delia Garcia and her team are working quickly to expand capacity at the call centers,” Kelly said. “They have added phone lines, hired additional employees and are working with employers to speed up the benefit process. The website remains the fastest and most efficient way to file for benefits, but if you must call in, please be patient. This is an incredibly stressful time for everybody, and the Department of Labor is working hard to get applications processed and benefits distributed.”

The executive order can be viewed here: <https://governor.kansas.gov/newsroom/executive-orders/>

Please visit kdheks.gov/coronavirus for additional virus-related information. Due to the high call volume, Kansans seeking to file for Unemployment Insurance benefits are encouraged to file online at getkansasbenefits.gov.