



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Ortt, Colleagues Call for DOL Failures to be Addressed

ROBERT G. ORTT April 22, 2020

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“The only ones not shocked by the Department of Labor’s botched unemployment system are the elected officials, small businesses, and constituents who have had the misfortune of dealing with the DOL in the past. Unfortunately, the current pandemic and shutdown of our state have introduced hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers to the same misfortune. As a State Senator, I have gone months where I was unable to get a simple returned phone call from the department’s commissioner. While I am saddened, I am certainly not shocked by the latest iteration of the DOL’s systemic failure.

“When taxpayers spend hundreds of millions a year on a government entity, they deserve better than an antiquated operating system and obstinate bureaucracy. Gov. Cuomo must step in and address the mess that is his Department of Labor. Make no mistake about it: COVID-19 didn’t cause the DOL’s failure, it only exposed it.”

Sen. Daphne Jordan (R,C,I,Ref-Halfmoon) said, “The Coronavirus health crisis has caused an economic crisis with approximately 1.2 million New Yorkers applying for unemployment and 22 million Americans out of work. These are real people, not statistics; they are hurting and need immediate assistance. While the State Department of Labor has undertaken much-needed efforts to fix its broken system, the fact of the matter is that thousands – possibly tens of thousands – of unemployed New Yorkers still can’t get through and have gone weeks without money. The system still isn’t working, people are frustrated, angry, and want to know why state government wasn’t better prepared for the influx of new claims. My office has received several hundred calls and emails from constituents desperately seeking help in trying to get through and file their unemployment claims. This ongoing problem needs to get fixed, fast. Whether it’s through surging more state employees to help with the unanswered claims, or continuing to improve the website, the Department of Labor needs to step up and get folks the help they need.”

Sen. Pam Helming (R,C,I-Geneva) said, “Across New York State, families are struggling to put food on the table and pay their bills because of continued delays with unemployment. The Governor today described these delays as an “annoyance.” To many, these delays are the difference between being able to keep their lights on and rent/mortgage paid. New York has one of the largest, most expensive state governments in the nation and should be able to figure out how to process these applications in a timely way. That is not too much to ask when you consider how much we pay in taxes!”

Sen. George Borrello (R,C,I,LIBT-Sunset Bay) said, “Desperate and frustrated constituents have been calling my district offices seven days a week to plead for help in the face of repeated, failed attempts to file their unemployment claims through a system unable to handle the demand. It is clear that the Department of Labor’s focus in recent years has been enacting ever-more onerous rules and regulations on employers, while neglecting badly needed technology and efficiency upgrades to its online and phone claims systems. Unemployed New Yorkers just looking to put food on the table deserve better.”

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