



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

State Needs to Step Up and Fix the Unemployment System NOW

Jeff Bishop, Communications Director

May 9, 2020

ISSUE:

- [Department of Labor; COVID-19; Unemployment](#)



ONEONTA, 05/09/20 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today [continued his call for help for the thousands of unemployed New Yorkers](#) who have yet to receive their unemployment benefits.

Senator Seward, along with members of the New York State Senate Republican Conference, called on Governor Cuomo to fix his broken unemployment system and proposed a series of recommendations to remedy failures at the Department of Labor. Senate Republicans [released a video](#) with their call to the governor and DOL, and the story of what is happening to real people because of the administration's failure.

“At a time when individuals and families need the state to come through for them they are instead left hurting and in the dark,” said Senator Seward. **“Many people have been waiting weeks, even months, for essential unemployment benefits to feed their families and maintain some semblance of a normal life. The inability of the Department of Labor to process these claims is nothing short of a disaster. This is a crisis we cannot tolerate any longer.”**

While the state has [reportedly spent nearly \\$88 million on high-end firm Deloitte](#) to overhaul the DOL call system and for 200 firm employees, desperate unemployed New Yorkers still cannot get through or have legitimate filings stuck in the system.

Senator Seward and the Senate Republicans are calling for the following immediate steps to be taken:

- The governor must streamline application certifications and allow applicants to “certify” upon application, while still providing appropriate safeguards to help ensure that benefits only go to eligible New Yorkers;
- In addition to the 3,000 employees currently working phones, the DOL must collaborate with other state agencies to train thousands more of the state's workforce, who are staying at home, to rapidly field calls and help New Yorkers file to receive benefits immediately;

- New York State Comptroller DiNapoli, who oversees payments, contracts, and finances in the state, should be empowered to provide emergency oversight and assistance to DOL;
- Comptroller DiNapoli should conduct an immediate, fast-track audit of the DOL's procedures and administration of the program; and
- A state legislative joint committee should conduct an immediate review and investigation into DOL's failed handling of unemployment benefits throughout the pandemic.

Today's action follows a bipartisan effort Senator Seward took earlier this week, calling for an audit by the State Comptroller and a State Legislative Joint Committee investigation into the state Department of Labor's handling of unemployment benefit applications in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Dozens of people, contact my office every day, desperate for help. Many have made hundreds of calls to the Department of Labor and their stories are horrific - calls unanswered, hang-ups, and a lack of answers. My office has helped hundreds receive the benefits they need and deserve, but more needs to be done now on the state level to clear up this tragic situation,” Seward concluded.