

# N E W S R E L E A S E

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## **Unemployment benefits top \$100 billion while backlog continues to drop**

### ***Updates on fighting fraud and new developments for claimants***

**Sacramento** – The total of unemployment benefits providing support for California workers and local economies during this historic COVID-19 pandemic has now hit \$101 billion in just seven months. About \$55 billion of that is in regular state-provided Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits which is more than double what was paid in the three worst years of the Great Recession combined.

Since March, the EDD has processed approximately 15.2 million claims between the regular UI program and extension claims, as well as the separate Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. See the current data on UI claims further below. It includes recent claim estimates based on the week ending September 19 to accommodate for a two-week reset period during which the EDD implemented a new ID.me identify verification tool at the beginning of the online application for benefits.

This ID.me enhancement is providing a quicker and more efficient way to authenticate claimants, and is significantly reducing manual workload that has led to backlogs. The latest data shows significant progress in the last three weeks.

- The backlog has declined 32% for initial claims that take more than 21 days to issue first payment or disqualification.
- The backlog has declined 24% for continued claims for those who have received at least one payment and are waiting more than 21 days for further payment or disqualification.
- The EDD now features all current dashboards available on one new [facts and stats webpage](#). There you can find the latest data on claims, payments, trends, and backlog while efforts continue to consolidate data into a more simplified format.

### **New UI Claims Flow Chart to help claimants**

A new [Flow Chart](#) is now available on the EDD website, designed to assist workers who lose their jobs or have their hours reduced through no fault of their own in determining what kind of benefit claim they may qualify for. The Flow Chart also provides general guidance on extension benefits available and what to expect if and when claimants run out of their up to 26 weeks of regular UI benefits.

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## **Further developments in issuing \$300 a week Lost Wages**

### **Assistance payments**

The EDD is issuing a 6<sup>th</sup> and final week of supplemental payments under the federal Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program in California. An estimated \$6 billion in LWA payments have been issued over the last several weeks, including to more than 3.4 million claimants receiving the 6<sup>th</sup> of payments so far. LWA funding supports an extra \$300 payment for each week of regular UI, extension benefits, or federal PUA benefits eligible Californians already received for the weeks between July 26 and September 5. The additional \$300 payments can only be issued to claimants meeting these eligibility requirements:

- Have a minimum weekly benefit award of \$100 or more on their initial claim, even if they received a lower payment during this time period because they reported wages.
- Attested that their unemployment is caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The self-attestation is collected as a quick and easy yes or no question. As stated on the self-attestation form, if a claimant answers no, the EDD is required to disqualify the claimant from receiving LWA payments.

### **Anti-fraud efforts and developments**

The EDD continues numerous efforts to fight identity fraud prevalent in the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program across the country. The new ID.me identity verification tool implemented October 5 at the beginning of the online application process for unemployment benefits is helping to thwart any new fraud attempts while the department is zeroing in on previous organized fraud schemes.

The EDD is partnering with investigators and the Bank of America in examining cases of excessive multiple claims at the same address along with other key fraud indicators. The priority is to quickly verify the identity of any claimants that may have been impacted by scammer attacks while shutting down fraudulent claims.

As part of the process, some debit cards have been temporarily frozen until identity can be confirmed. The EDD has implemented various methods to expedite that confirmation process for those who respond to EDD's emails, texts, and mailed notices and provide verifying documents or information. Payments will be re-established quickly for claimants verified to be legitimate and accounting will be done to clear them from any connection to a possible fraudulent claim initiated in their name or involving their address.

For those who don't respond to numerous communication efforts or don't pass verification checks, notices of disqualification and appeal rights will be sent as part of the shut-down process. The EDD continues to ask the public to be on the look-out for any mail that may not belong to you, mark it return to sender, and hand it to your mail carrier if possible.

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The public's assistance is greatly appreciated in stopping these fraud attacks and protecting the UI program for California workers in need. You can learn more about fraud and how to report suspicious activity on the [Fraud and Penalties: What you Need to Know page](#) of the EDD website.

**See updated UI Data Dashboard on claim activity below:**

<b>Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard</b>				
		<b>Current Week</b>	<b>Prior Weeks</b>	<b>Total</b>
		<b>October 10, 2020</b>	<b>WE 3/7 -10/3/20</b>	<b>WE 3/7 -10/10/20</b>
<b>Total Applications Submitted**</b> <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)<sup>1</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	40,109	5,662,409	5,702,518
	<b>PUA</b>	20,215	4,335,766	4,355,981
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	178,636	1,327,419	1,506,055
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	7,439	149,337	156,776
	<b>Total</b>	246,399	11,474,931	11,721,330
<b>Total Claims Processed**</b> <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims)<sup>4</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	226,176	9,421,468	9,647,644
	<b>PUA</b>	99,824	3,800,297	3,900,121
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	190,396	1,421,696	1,612,092
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	8,019	114,623	122,642
	<b>Total</b>	524,415	14,758,084	15,282,499
<b>Total Benefits Paid</b> <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)<sup>5</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	\$1.1 billion	\$53.1 billion	\$54.2 billion
	<b>PUA</b>	\$792 million	\$35.7 billion	\$36.5 billion
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	\$310 million	\$3.8 billion	\$4.1 billion
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	\$57.1 million	\$397 million	\$454 million
	<b>LWA<sup>10</sup></b>	\$946 million	\$5.1 billion	\$6.0 billion
	<b>Total</b>	\$3.2 billion	\$98.0 billion	\$101 billion
<b>Individuals Paid Benefits<sup>6,7</sup></b> <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	3,202,000	3,246,000	
	<b>PUA</b>	1,414,000	1,436,000	
	<b>Total</b>	4,616,000 <sup>8</sup>	4,682,000 <sup>9</sup>	

\*\*California has announced a two week pause in its processing of new online initial claims for unemployment insurance benefits. Recognizing that the pause will likely result in significant week to week swings in initial claims for California and the nation unrelated to any changes in economic conditions, California's initial claims and continued claims for the regular UI program and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program published in the UI Claims News Release will reflect the level reported during the last week prior to the pause (WE 9/19).

1. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was implemented in California on April 28, 2020. This data includes new initial claims only.
2. The Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) was implemented in California on May 27, 2020. PEUC claims are an extension of a regular UI claim. For the week ending October 3, 2020, (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 724,226
3. FED-ED was implemented in California on July 1, 2020. FED-ED claims are an extension of a regular UI claim.
4. Claims processed through UI Online, along with about 5% of claims that arrive via paper or phone. This accounts for claims received in the current week as well as past weeks. The data also includes additional claims or claims that are re-opened when there is a break in certifying for benefits, for example when the claimant may return to work but then later come back to collect benefits on their initial claim. The total claims processed from 3/7- 10/10/20 may include multiple claims from the same applicant.
5. Includes \$600 federal stimulus payments EDD adds to each week of regular UI, PUA, PEUC, and FED-ED benefits. Regular UI benefits are paid out of California's UI Trust Fund with contributions from employers, PUA, PEUC, FED-ED and the \$600 federal stimulus payments are paid for by the federal government. The Total Benefits Paid may not add up due to the rounding data.
6. Counts include individuals claiming regular UI, PEUC, and FED-ED benefits. If an individual claims a regular UI benefit, PEUC, or FED-ED benefit in a four-week rolling time period, they are only counted once.
7. Four-week rolling totals accommodate for numerous variables that dictate what claimants receive benefits in any given bi-weekly period. Data excludes claimants were who fully employed, disqualified or had excessive earnings that would disqualify them for a week of benefits.
8. Four-week rolling total between week-ending September 19th and week-ending October 10th, 2020.
9. Four-week rolling total between week-ending September 12th and week-ending October 3rd, 2020.
10. The Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program was implemented in California on September 5th, 2020 to provide eligible claimants with a Lost Wage Assistance payment of \$300 per week in addition to their weekly benefit amount beginning with weeks ending on or after August 1, 2020.