

For Immediate Release

03.17.2020

Governor Hutchinson Expedites Unemployment Benefits For Those Impacted by COVID-19

WEST MEMPHIS – Governor Asa Hutchinson has directed the Arkansas Department of Commerce to expedite unemployment benefits to assist Arkansans whose employment status may be impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, he announced at a press conference on Tuesday.

Under current Arkansas law (Ark. Code Ann. §11-10-507(4)), individuals who claim unemployment insurance must wait one week, which is not counted as a week of unemployment. The Governor has directed the Arkansas Department of Commerce to waive the waiting period. This directive will allow the department to pay claims more quickly.

Governor Hutchinson has also directed the Department of Commerce to waive current work-search requirements for 30 days, allowing the unemployed to receive benefits without seeking other employment. This exception applies only to those employed by businesses that are temporarily closed with plans to reopen.

In a third action, the Governor has directed the Department of Commerce to allow the unemployed to apply for benefits online or by telephone rather than in person in a further effort to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19.

“These important changes will allow Arkansans impacted by COVID-19 to file unemployment insurance claims, register for work, and seek job-placement assistance in a timely manner while also protecting ADWS employees and mitigating the spread of the virus,” Governor Hutchinson said.

Click [HERE](#) to find an Arkansas Workforce Center Location near you, or visit www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov to complete your application online.

CONTACT: Press Shop (press@governor.arkansas.gov)

LOCAL OFFICE	ADDRESS	ZIP CODE	TELEPHONE	FAX	MANAGER	COUNTIES SERVED
Arkadelphia	502 S. 6 St., PO Box 620	71923-6011/71923-0620	870-246-2481	870-246-0344	Jenna Ramos	Clark
Batesville	396 Barnett Dr., PO Box 2296	72501-8994/72503-2296	870-793-4156	870-793-2577	Raye Ann Hager	Fulton, Independence, Izard, Sharp, Stone
Benton	400 Edison Street, PO Box 2470	72015-4313/72018-2470	501-776-2974	501-776-2980	Vacant	Saline
Blytheville	2825 S. Division, PO Box 1409	72321/72316-1409	870-762-2035	870-762-0561	Eddie Perdue	Mississippi
Camden	237 Jackson Street SW, PO Box 717	71701-3941/71711-0717	870-836-5024	870-836-7237	Joshua Taylor	Calhoun, Dallas, Ouachita
Conway	1500 N. Museum Rd., #111, PO Box 189	72032-4761/72033-0189	501-730-9894/9897	501-730-9869	Diana Kirkdoffer	Faulkner, Van Buren
Dumas	130 W. Waterman	71639	870-382-1017	870-382-1029	Nancy Jones	Desha
Eldorado	523 E. Sixth Street, PO Box 2038	71730-5175/71731-2038	870-862-6456	870-862-8962	Shemekia Hicks	Union
Fayetteville	2143 W. Martin Luther King Blvd., PO Box 1205	72701-6219/72702-1205	479-521-5730	479-521-1595	John Jones	Madison, Washington
Forrest City	300 Eldridge Road, Ste. 2, PO Box 1059	72335-4901/72336-1059	870-633-2900/4580	870-633-1710	Alice Williford	Cross, Monroe, Prairie, St. Francis
Fort Smith	616 Garrison Ave., Rm 101, PO Box 1987	72901-2525/72902-1987	479-783-0231	479-783-2132	Tom Borokofsky	Crawford, Logan, Sebastian, Franklin
Harrison	818 N. HWY. 62-65, PO Box 280	72601-2100/72602-0280	870-741-8236	870-741-7901	Aaron Johnson	Boone, Carroll, Newton, Searcy
Helena	819 Newman Drive, PO Box 279	72342-3230/72342-0279	870-338-7415	870-338-3494	Delois Hare	Phillips, Lee
Hope	205 Smith Road, Suite A	71801-8971	870-777-3421	870-722-2912	Gary Do	Hempstead, Howard, Nevada, S. Pike
Hot Springs	2254 Albert Pike, Suite A, PO Box 2278	71913-7290/71914-2278	501-525-3450	501-525-3944	Cindy White-Hamilton	Garland, Montgomery, N. Pike
Jacksontonville	#2 Creativeview Plaza, PO Box 39	72076-7389/72078-0039	501-982-3835	501-982-5385	Charles Danner	Pulaski
Jonesboro	2311 East Nettleton Avenue/PO Box 16127	72401-7205/72403-6127	870-935-5594	870-935-0024	Judy Clayton	Craighead, Poinsett, Lawrence, Randolph
Little Rock UI	5401 S. University, PO Box 4970	72209/72214-4970	501-682-2257	501-682-7797	Debbie Wolfe	Pulaski
Little Rock ES	5401 S. University, PO Box 4970	72209/72214-4970	501-682-2257	501-682-7801	Dollie Fountain	Pulaski
Little Rock TWFP	5401 S. University, PO Box 4279	72209/72214-4279	501-320-3026/3027	501-320-3075	Earnest Merritt	Pulaski
Magnolia	104 Harvey Couch Blvd, PO Box 369	71753/71754-0369	870-234-3440	870-234-8360	Wendell Russ	Columbia, Lafayette
Malvern	1735 E. Sullenberger St., PO Box 788	72104-3832/72104-0788	501-332-5461	501-337-9003	Alethea Woodard	Hot Spring
Mena	601C Hwy 71N, PO Box 230	71953-4393/71953-0230	479-394-3060	479-394-4910	Shari Dominguez	Polk, Scott
Monticello	477 S. Main St., PO Box 30	71655-4817/71657-0030	870-367-2476	870-367-7105	Nancy Jones	Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Desha, Drew
Mt. Home	1058 Highland Circle, #20, PO Box 1945	72653-3251/72654-1945	870-425-2386	870-424-6056	Jenny Patoka	Baxter, Marion
Newport	7648 Victory Blvd, Suite B	72112-8912	870-523-3641	870-523-8678	Jackie Donaldson	Jackson, Woodruff
Paragould	1015 Linwood Dr., Ste. 4, PO Box 336	72450-4430/72451-0336	870-236-8512	870-236-9162	Kelly Aaron	Clay, Greene
Pine Bluff	1001 S. Tennessee St., PO Box 8308	71601-5032/71611-8308	870-534-1920	870-534-7688	William Campbell	Arkansas, Cleveland, Grant, Jefferson, Lincoln
Rogers	100 N. Dixieland Road, PO Box 99	72765-5986/72757-0099	479-636-4755	479-621-0322	Tridena Feaster	Benton, Washington
Russellville	104 S. Rochester Ave., PO Box 727	72801-5337/72811-0727	479-968-2784	479-968-1670	Nell Golden	Conway, Johnson, Perry, Pope, Yell
Clarksville	23 Sherwood Plaza Shopping Ctr., PO Box 774	72830-0774	479-754-8969	479-754-1166	Nell Golden	Johnson
Searcy	501 W. Arch Ave., PO Box 248	72143-5203/72145-0248	501-268-8601	501-268-9166	Jennifer Pike	Cleburne, White
Texarkana	1702 Hampton Road, Texarkana TX	75503-2598/75503-0151	870-216-4011	903-792-0983	Lola Smith	Little River, Miller, Sevier
West Memphis	ASUMid-South, 2003 W. Broadway PO Box 1928	72301/72303-1928	870-400-2269	870-735-7656	Dejanette Smith	Crittenden

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The coronavirus pandemic is already costing many people their jobs. The first proof of that came in Thursday morning, when a government report showed weekly jobless claims in the United States spiked to their highest level in two-and-a-half years.

The US Labor Department reported that 281,000 Americans filed for their first week of unemployment benefits in the week ending March 14 — a sudden 70,000 jump from the week before, and 60,000 claims more than economists had expected. It marked the highest level in initial claims since the week ending September 2, 2017, when claims spiked in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

Last week's sudden increase is "clearly attributable to impacts from the COVID-19 virus," the Department of Labor said in release.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the US job market was on strong footing and initial unemployment insurance claims had been hovering between roughly 210,000 and 230,000 a week.

The sudden jump marked a 33% increase, the biggest increase in percentage terms since 1992, and "bigger than anything we saw during the Great Recession," noted Heidi Shierholz, senior economist for the Economic Policy Institute and former chief economist for the US Department of Labor.

Meanwhile, 1.7 million Americans filed for continued claims (their second week of unemployment benefits or more) in the week ending March 7. That number was barely changed from the week before, reflecting the strong US labor market before the pandemic accelerated.

This number is also expected to jump in the near term.

The number of jobless claims will get more and more attention in the months to come as it is published on a weekly basis, tracking the real economy much more closely than monthly or quarterly government data, which is published with a longer lag.

Layoffs are expected to worsen significantly as the coronavirus crisis is forcing businesses to readjust.