



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Speeding Up Government: Governor Shapiro and L&I Secretary Walker Highlight Major Improvements to Pennsylvania's Unemployment Compensation System, Lowest Call Wait Times in Over Six Years

The Shapiro Administration's historic progress reflects a broader "no wrong door" approach to helping workers access unemployment compensation (UC) benefits — whether by phone, email, online chat, or in-person at CareerLink centers — ensuring Pennsylvanians get the help they need, when they need it.

Call wait times have dropped from over an hour to under 10 minutes, email responses average under 24 hours, and more than 106,000 workers have received in-person support.



Harrisburg, PA – Today, Governor Josh Shapiro joined **Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Secretary Nancy A. Walker**, labor leaders, worker advocates, and frontline staff at L&I to highlight the significant improvements the Shapiro Administration has made to **Pennsylvania’s Unemployment Compensation (UC) system** — making it faster, more reliable, and easier for workers to access.

From day one, **Governor Shapiro** has been laser-focused on delivering results for Pennsylvanians and speeding up government — and fixing an unemployment system that failed too many workers during the pandemic was a top priority. Under his leadership, the Commonwealth has built a “no wrong door” approach to UC services, ensuring Pennsylvanians can get help by phone, email, online chat, or in-person at CareerLink centers.

A major milestone: the **average call wait time at the UC Service Center has dropped to just nine minutes**, the fastest recorded since March 2019 — and more than one full hour shorter than when the Governor took office.

“Here in Pennsylvania, we stand up for our workers, and we fight for them,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “When a Pennsylvanian loses their job, they deserve timely help — not roadblocks. By creating multiple ways to access benefits, reducing wait times, and eliminating backlogs, we’re making the Unemployment Compensation system faster, fairer, and more accessible than ever. This progress is the result of hard work by Secretary Walker and the entire UC team — and it’s a promise that we will continue to deliver for every worker in our Commonwealth.”

When the Governor took office, more than **40,000 pandemic-era claims were still backlogged**, and workers trying to call the UC service center often had to wait more than an hour — or call back more than 10 times — just to get help.

Within just seven months, the **Shapiro Administration** eliminated the entire backlog of claims. Since then, L&I has implemented a series of reforms to make it easier for Pennsylvanians to access the UC system, including:

- **The lowest [call wait times](#) in more than six years** — dropping from well over an hour to under 10 minutes on average
- **Hiring nearly [400 new UC interviewers](#)** to answer calls and process claims quickly
- **Expanding [UC Connect](#)** — bringing in-person assistance to CareerLink centers across the Commonwealth, where more than 106,000 Pennsylvanians have already gotten help
- **Installing self-service [ID verification kiosks](#)** in CareerLinks to make the process faster and more secure
- **Creating a new [24/7 secure live chat](#)** option to give Pennsylvanians around-the-clock access to help with UC questions
- **Responding to emails within 24 hours**, cutting wait times dramatically

As a result of these reforms, workers are now able to get help more quickly, access benefits more easily, and trust the system to deliver when they need it most.

“From the start, this Administration has been committed to fixing an unemployment system that was overwhelmed during the pandemic — and that targeted investment and commitment to a better user experience is delivering real results,” said **Secretary Walker**. “We’ve cleared tens of thousands of backlogged claims, cut call wait times to the lowest level in six years, helped more than 100,000 Pennsylvanians through UC Connect, expanded our UC Live virtual chat, and much more. Thanks to Governor Shapiro’s leadership, we’re building a stronger system that workers can rely on when they need it most.”

Since January 2023, these reforms have delivered real results for Pennsylvanians:

- **Call attempts:** Dropped from 11.4 to just 2.8 in 2025 — a 75 percent improvement
- **Email response times:** Now averaging under 24 hours
- **In-person assistance:** Over 106,000 Pennsylvanians [served](#) through UC Connect appointments
- **Financial impact:** **More than \$1.1 billion** in UC benefits paid to 691,564 individuals so far in 2025

“For many who call us, it’s their first time interacting with the UC system — and it can feel overwhelming. We want every claimant to know we’re here to help and to reassure them that they have a supportive ally as they navigate job loss,” said **Mitchell Smith, UC Claims Intake Interviewer, PA Office of Unemployment Compensation**. “Thanks to the improvements we’ve made across the UC system, we’re getting fewer calls — and that gives me and my coworkers more time to complete determinations and move claims forward. At the end of the day, it all leads to our ultimate goal: getting claims processed quickly and accurately.”

“The Mon Valley Unemployed Committee is excited to stand with Governor Shapiro today to mark real progress in making the PA Unemployment Compensation system accessible for our state’s unemployed people,” said **Barney Oursler, Co-Chair of the Mon Valley Unemployed Committee**. “We thank Governor Shapiro and his leadership at the Department of Labor & Industry, starting with Secretary Nancy Walker at the top. When we brought the failing UC system to the Governor’s attention, they responded with action. From the first weeks of his administration, Governor Shapiro made clear to all of the community and labor advocates that he charged his new leadership at L&I with the task of fixing the broken UC system. We look forward to continuing our collaboration to keep making the UC system more accessible to unemployed Pennsylvanians.”

“Unlike many other states after the pandemic, Pennsylvania made a very different choice when it came to its Unemployment Compensation workforce,” said **Nina Coffey, Secretary Treasurer of SEIU Local 668**. “Rather than cutting jobs or salaries, the Commonwealth invested. That investment led to proper training for UC workers, prioritizing securing the tools and resources they needed to do their jobs effectively. Today, their experience and commitment continue to benefit Pennsylvania, and we see the results in a stronger, more efficient system. On behalf of SEIU Local 668, I want to thank Governor Shapiro for his strong commitment to working with our union to ensure we are delivering for the people of Pennsylvania while also improving the working conditions of our dedicated members.”

Pennsylvanians experiencing job loss can [contact L&I directly](#) for assistance through the Department’s UC helpline (888-313-7284), by email(UCHelp@pa.gov) or the [live chat service](#).

Workforce and Economic Development Under Governor Shapiro and His Administration

In addition to fixing the Commonwealth's UC system, **Governor Shapiro** and his Administration has delivered broad workforce and economic gains for Pennsylvanians:

- **Unemployment rate:** Pennsylvania's rate [remains](#) at 4.0 percent, below the national average for the 27th consecutive month
- **Private-sector investment and job creation:** Over \$25.2 billion secured and more than 11,200 jobs created statewide
- **Streamlined Commonwealth hiring:** [Recognized](#) federal experience as equivalent to Commonwealth experience, [eliminated](#) college degree requirements for 92 percent of state jobs, and [cut](#) average state hiring time by 40 percent — from 90 days in January 2023 to 54 days today
- **HIRE Committee:** Established the [Hire, Improve, Recruit, Empower \(HIRE\) Committee](#) to attract the next generation of public servants and ensure a representative Commonwealth workforce
- **Economic development:** Launched Pennsylvania's first statewide [Economic Development Strategy](#) in nearly two decades, targeting life sciences, agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and robotics and technology

Governor Shapiro's [2025-26 proposed budget](#) builds on this progress with:

- **\$12.5 million for the Workforce and Economic Development Network** to expand worker training
- **\$2 million for Career Connect**, a statewide program to expand internships at Pennsylvania companies

Learn more about the **Shapiro Administration's** efforts to invest in Pennsylvania's workforce and expand job training opportunities in the Governor's [2025-26 budget proposal](#) at shapirobudget.pa.gov and discover how the Administration is [building a competitive workforce](#) for the Commonwealth's future.

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