

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

FLERICK NTELA
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 21A-UI-24433-SN-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**OC: 08/23/21
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Lost Wage Assistance (LWA) benefits
Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed an appeal from the September 2, 2021, (reference 03) unemployment insurance decision that concluded he was overpaid \$300.00 in LWA benefits. After proper notice, a telephone hearing was conducted on January 3, 2022. The hearing was held jointly with appeal 21A-UI-24430-SN-T and 21A-UI-24432-SN-T. The claimant participated. Official notice of the administrative records was taken.

ISSUES:

Whether the claimant's appeal is timely? Whether there are reasonable grounds to consider it otherwise timely?

Has the claimant been overpaid any LWA benefits?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant filed a new claim for unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of August 23, 2021.

The claimant filed for and received a total of \$300.00 Lost Wage Assistance benefits for the week ending September 5, 2020.

The unemployment insurance decision that disqualified the claimant from receiving unemployment insurance benefits has been affirmed in a decision of the administrative law judge in appeal 21A-UI-24430-SN-T.

A disqualification decision was mailed to claimant's last known address of record on September 2, 2021. The claimant did receive the decision within ten days. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by September 12, 2021. (Exhibit D-1) The appeal was not filed until November 1, 2021, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision. (Exhibit D-2)

The claimant explained that he does not speak English, so it took him some time to find a translator to help him understand the decision. The claimant explained that it typically takes him three days to find a French translator. He did not provide credible testimony suggesting he received the decision on a different date than the one on the decision.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The administrative law judge concludes the claimant's appeal is untimely. He further concludes that he does not have authority to evaluate the merits of the appeal.

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of issuing the notice of the filing of the claim to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. All interested parties shall select a format as specified by the department to receive such notifications. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsections 10 and 11, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was issued, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the

appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. While the administrative law judge is sympathetic to the claimant's circumstances given the language barrier, several months went by before he appealed the decision disqualifying him. He testified it only takes him three days to get a document translated. The claimant has not met his burden that holding him the appeal period on the decision would deny him a reasonable opportunity to appeal.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to 871 IAC 24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.6(2), and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

Assuming arguendo the claimant's appeal is timely, the claimant has been overpaid LWA benefits.

Iowa Code section 96.3(7) provides, in pertinent part:

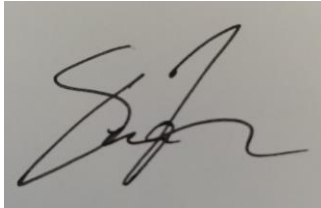
7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

- a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

Since the decision disqualifying the claimant has been affirmed, the claimant was overpaid \$300.00 in LWA benefits.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated September 2, 2021, (reference 03), is affirmed.
The claimant was overpaid \$300.00 in LWA benefits.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean M. Nelson', is shown on a light gray background.

Sean M. Nelson
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax (515) 725-9067

January 28, 2022
Decision Dated and Mailed

smn/mh