

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

MATT A VORHIES

Claimant

BASS PRO OUTDOOR WORLD LLC

Employer

APPEAL 20A-UI-13544-S1-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 04/05/20

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.4-3 – Able and Available
871 IAC 24.23(10) – Voluntary Leave of Absence
Iowa Code § 96.6(2) - Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Matt Vorhies (claimant) appealed a representative's June 2, 2020, decision (reference 01) that concluded ineligibility to receive unemployment insurance benefits as of April 5, 2020, because a leave of absence was granted by Bass Pro Outdoor World (employer) at the claimant's request. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for December 29, 2020. The claimant participated personally. The employer did not provide a telephone number where it could be reached and therefore, did not participate in the hearing.

Exhibit D-1 was received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative file. 20A-UI-13544, 20A-UI-13546, and 20A-UI-13547 were heard at the same time.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the appeal was filed in a timely manner.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on March 31, 2015, as a full-time camping and marine lead. On March 30, 2020, the claimant requested and was granted a leave of absence because he was concerned about Covid-19 and his underlying medical issues. Later, the claimant understood the employer was going to grant him a furlough. The employer paid the claimant his regular wages of \$560.00 per work during the leave/furlough.

The claimant filed for unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of April 5, 2020. His weekly benefit amount was determined to be \$390.00. The claimant received benefits of \$390.00 per week from April 5, 2020, to the week ending April 18, 2020. This is a total of \$780.00 in state unemployment insurance benefits after the separation from employment. He also received \$1,200.00 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation for the two-week

period ending April 18, 2020. The claimant did not report any wages when he filed his weekly claims.

A disqualification decision was mailed to the claimant's last known address of record on June 2, 2020. The claimant received the decision within ten days. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by June 12, 2020. The Agency sent the claimant a mass mailing, general decision, indicating he was eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation if he was eligible for state unemployment insurance benefits. The claimant was confused by the receipt of the two decisions and called the Agency in June 2020. The worker told the claimant the denial decision was in effect. The claimant filed his appeal on October 27, 2020.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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 mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. 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 mailed to the claimant's last known address, 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.

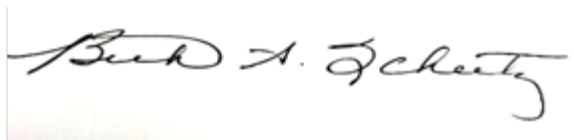
The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to 871 IAC 24.35(2). The administrative law 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).

Even though the claimant is not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits under state law, he may be eligible for federally funded unemployment insurance benefits under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“Cares Act”), Public Law 116-136. Section 2102 of the CARES Act creates a new temporary federal program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) that in general provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits. An individual receiving PUA benefits may also receive the \$600 weekly benefit amount (WBA) under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program if he or she is eligible for such compensation for the week claimed. The claimant must apply for PUA, as noted in the instructions provided in the “Note to Claimant” below.

DECISION:

The June 2, 2020, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect. The claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

Note to Claimant: This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits. If you disagree with this decision you may file an appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. Individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits due to disqualifying separations, but who are currently unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility under the program.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.



Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

January 15, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/scn