

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

**GARY J COUNTENTOS**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO: 14A-UI-03604-JTT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**OC: 04/15/12  
Claimant: Appellant (6)**

Iowa Code section 17A.12(3) – Default Decision  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Gary Coutentos filed an appeal from the March 23, 2014, reference 03, unemployment insurance decision that indicated his Iowa income tax refund would be withheld to recover a prior overpayment of unemployment insurance benefits. A notice of hearing was mailed to the Mr. Coutentos' last-known address of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 10:00 a.m. on April 24, 2014. Mr. Coutentos was not available at the telephone number provided for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing. Based upon the appellant's failure to participate in the hearing and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law and decision.

**ISSUE:**

Should the appeal be dismissed based upon the claimant/appellant not participating in the hearing?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The appeal hearing in this matter was initially set for April 24, 2014 at 3:30 p.m. and the claimant/appellant, Gary Coutentos was appropriately notified of that hearing date and time. Mr. Coutentos requested a morning hearing and the appeal hearing was reset for April 24, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. Gary Coutentos was appropriately notified of that new hearing date and time. At the time set for the hearing, Mr. Coutentos was not available at the telephone number provided for the hearing. Mr. Coutentos did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

The March 23, 2014, reference 03, unemployment insurance decision indicated that Mr. Coutentos' Iowa income tax refund would be withheld to recover a prior overpayment of unemployment insurance benefits.

## **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code section 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. ... If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.

The Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) provide:

If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

- a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.
- b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire ex parte as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.
- c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.

The claimant/appellant appealed the representative's decision but failed to participate in the hearing. The claimant/appellant has therefore defaulted on his appeal pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.14(7), and the representative's decision remains in force and effect.

If the appellant disagrees with this decision, pursuant to the rule, the appellant must make a written request to the administrative law judge that the hearing be reopened within 15 days after

the mailing date of this decision. The written request should be mailed to the administrative law judge at the address listed at the end of this decision and must explain the emergency or other good cause that prevented the appellant from participating in the hearing at its scheduled time.

**DECISION:**

The Claims Deputy's March 23, 2014, reference 03, unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The decision that indicated that the claimant's Iowa income tax refund would be withheld to recover a prior overpayment of unemployment insurance benefits remains in effect.

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James E. Timberland  
Administrative Law Judge  
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Decision Dated and Mailed

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