

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

LUKE D PARSONS

Claimant

APPEAL NO: 12A-UI-07660-DT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

QUALITY PORK SYSTEMS LC

Employer

OC: 05/20/12

Claimant: Respondent (1)

Section 96.6-2 – Timeliness of Protest

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Quality Pork Systems, L.C. (employer) appealed a representative's June 18, 2012 decision (reference 04) that concluded Luke D. Parsons (claimant) was qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits and the employer's account might be charged because the employer's protest was not timely filed. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on July 19, 2012. The claimant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing. Larry Aronson appeared on the employer's behalf and presented testimony from one other witness, Connie Aronson. During the hearing, Exhibits A-1, A-2, and A-3 were entered into evidence. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the employer, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision affirming the representative's decision and allowing the claimant benefits.

ISSUE:

Should the employer's protest be treated as timely?

OUTCOME:

Affirmed. Benefits allowed.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant established a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective May 20, 2012. A notice of claim was mailed to the employer's designated agent's address of record on Friday, May 25, 2012. No evidence was provided to rebut the presumption that the agent/bookkeeper received the notice on or by Tuesday, May 29. The notice contained a warning that a protest must be postmarked or received by the Agency by June 4, 2012. The administrative law judge takes official notice of the fact that the front of the envelope in which the protest was mailed to the employer's agent/bookkeeper bore a warning, "OPEN IMMEDIATELY NOTICE OF CLAIM INSIDE." The protest was not filed until it was first faxed on June 10, 2012, which is after the date noticed on the notice of claim.

The employer's agent/bookkeeper operates a sole practice in Cherokee, Iowa. The employer operates its business in Albert City and Newell, Iowa. The agent bookkeeper was out of the office on or about May 31 and June 1, returning on or about June 4. The employer's management was out of town from May 31 through June 4. The agent/bookkeeper did not turn over the notice of claim to the employer's management until June 6; the employer observed that the deadline for making the protest had already passed, but proceeded to make a response on June 10.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The law provides that all interested parties shall be promptly notified about an individual filing a claim. The parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of claim to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. Iowa Code § 96.6-2. Another portion of Iowa Code § 96.6-2 dealing with timeliness of an appeal from a representative's decision states an appeal must be filed within ten days after notification of that decision was mailed. In addressing an issue of timeliness of an appeal under that portion of this Code section, the Iowa court has held that this statute clearly limits the time to do so, and compliance with the appeal notice provision is mandatory and jurisdictional. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979).

The administrative law judge considers the reasoning and holding of the *Beardslee* court controlling on the portion of Iowa Code § 96.6-2 which deals with the time limit to file a protest after the notice of claim has been mailed to the employer. Compliance with the protest provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). Pursuant to rules 871 IAC 26.2(96)(1) and 871 IAC 24.35(96)(1), protests are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). The question in this case thus becomes whether the employer was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert a protest 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). While there may have been a small window of time during which the employer's agent/bookkeeper could have turned over the protest to the employer's management in time for the management to make a timely protest, the employer's determination to designate an agent to receive its mail from the Agency, and that agent's delay in turning the protest over to the employer's management to make a response was a business decision for which the employer, not the claimant, must bear the consequences. The record shows that the employer did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely protest.

871 IAC 24.35(2) provides in pertinent part:

The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the department that the delay in submission was due to department error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service or its successor.

The employer has not shown that the delay for not complying with the jurisdictional time limit was due to department error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service. Since the employer filed the protest late without any legal excuse, the employer did not file a timely protest. Since the administrative law judge concludes that the protest was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.6-2, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the protest and the reasons for the claimant's

separation from employment, regardless of the merits of the employer's protest. See, *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979); *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979) and *Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company v. Employment Appeal Board*, 465 N.W.2d 674 (Iowa App. 1990).

DECISION:

The June 18, 2012 (reference 04) decision is affirmed. The protest in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/css