

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS AND APPEALS
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION, UI APPEALS BUREAU**

MAHMOUD NASEREDDIN
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 22A-UI-12338-JT-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

ATHENE ANNUITY AND LIFE COMPANY
Employer

**OC: 04/10/22
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code Section 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal
Iowa Code Section 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quit

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On May 12, 2022, Mahmoud Nasereddin (claimant) filed a late appeal from the April 28, 2022 (reference 01) decision that disqualified the claimant for benefits and that held the employer's account would not be charged for benefits, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant voluntarily quit on April 6, 2022 without good cause attributable to the employer. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on June 29, 2022. Claimant participated. The employer did not comply with the hearing notice instructions to call the toll-free number at the time of the hearing and did not participate. Arabic-English interpreter Suzanne Ismail (#14796) of CTS Language Link was available to assist with the hearing, if needed, but was not needed other than to assist with an accent issue so the administrative law judge could understand the claimant's utterance of the medical term sleep apnea. Exhibit A, the online appeal, and Exhibit B, a memo from the claimant's primary care physician, were received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the following Agency administrative records: the reference 01 decision.

ISSUE:

Whether the appeal was timely. Whether there is good cause to treat the appeal as timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

The claimant is a non-native, proficient English speaker. The claimant is able to read and speak English fluently. The claimant studied the English language for two years in Palestine, through an organization affiliated with the American Consulate, prior to moving to Iowa in 2012. Since then, the claimant has continued to improve his English language skills through work-related discourse and other discourse. Since 2020, the claimant has participated in college-level Information Technology coursework at DMACC in pursuit of an IT. Cybersecurity certificate. The claimant has been able to complete the coursework in English. The claimant demonstrated his English Language proficiency during the appeal hearing. The only time an interpreter was needed to assist with the hearing was when the administrative law judge could not understand the claimant's utterance of the medical term sleep apnea due to an accent issue. In that

instance, the interpreter, adept at navigating accent issues, restated the term in English without need for interpretation involving a language other than English. The claimant's spouse was also a non-native, proficient English speaker with English language skills comparable to or stronger than the claimant's English language skills.

On April 28, 2022, Iowa Workforce Development mailed the April 28, 2022 (reference 01) decision to the claimant's last-known address of record. The reference 01 decision disqualified the claimant for benefits and held the employer's account would not be charged for benefits, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant voluntarily quit on April 6, 2022 without good cause attributable to the employer. The reference 01 decision stated the decision would become final unless an appeal was postmarked by May 8, 2022 or was received by the Appeals Section by that date. The decision stated that if the deadline for appeal fell on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the deadline would be extended to the next working day. May 8, 2022 was a Sunday and the next working day was Monday, May 9, 2022. The United States Postal Service delivered the decision to the claimant's mailbox on Thursday, May 5, 2022, as indicated in the claimant's online appeal. The claimant read the decision, but did not note the appeal deadline information. The decision included instructions for filing an appeal online, by fax, by email, and by mail. The claimant had previously had contact with an IWD Workforce Advisor/Career Planner, Angel Hernandez, and elected to delay action on the matter until he could confer with Mr. Hernandez. On May 9, 2022, the claimant made an appointment with Mr. Hernandez for May 10, 2022. On May 10, 2022, the claimant met with Mr. Hernandez, who shared with the claimant the same online appeal link that was set forth on the back of the decision. Mr. Hernandez advised the claimant to move forward with filing the appeal. However, the claimant waited until May 12, 2022 to complete and transmit an online appeal. The claimant enlisted the assistance of his spouse to draft a detailed online appeal that included significantly more information, and more detailed information than required to effect an appeal. The Appeals Bureau received the appeal on May 12, 2022.

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-day deadline for appeal begins to run on the date Workforce Development mails the decision to the parties. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the Agency 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).

An appeal submitted by mail is deemed filed on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark of the envelope in which it was received, or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(1)(a). See also *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). An appeal submitted by any other means is deemed filed on the date it is received by the Unemployment Insurance Division of Iowa Workforce Development. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(1)(b).

The evidence in the record establishes 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). One 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).

No submission shall be considered timely if the delay in filing was unreasonable, as determined by the division after considering the circumstances in the case. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(2)(c).

The evidence in the record establishes an untimely appeal from the April 28, 2022 (reference 01) decision. The evidence establishes that the claimant received the reference 01 decision in a timely manner, on or about May 5, 2022, and had a reasonable opportunity to file an appeal by the May 9, 2022 extended appeal deadline. The weight of the evidence indicates there no language barrier issue that hindered the claimant's filing of the appeal or that necessitated delay in filing the appeal. At the time the claimant received the decision in the mail, the claimant had the remainder of May 5 and all of May 6 through 9, 2022 in which file an appeal within the statutorily-mandated appeal deadline. The claimant elected to delay filing the appeal to May 12, 2022. The late filing of the appeal was not attributable to the Iowa Workforce Development error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service. There is not good cause to treat the late appeal as a timely appeal. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(2). Because the appeal was untimely, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to disturb the decision from which the claimant appeals in the

present matter. See *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The claimant's appeal from the April 28, 2022 (reference 01) decision was untimely. The decision that disqualified the claimant for benefits and that held the employer's account would not be charged for benefits, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant voluntarily quit on April 6, 2022 without good cause attributable to the employer, remains in effect.



James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

September 1, 2022
Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/scn

APPEAL RIGHTS. If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Employment Appeal Board
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: eab.iowa.gov**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday. *There is no filing fee to file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board.*

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL STATE CLEARLY:

- 1) The name, address, and social security number of the claimant.
- 2) A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
- 3) That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
- 4) The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If you do not file an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at www.iowacourts.gov/efile. *There may be a filing fee to file the petition in District Court.*

Note to Parties: YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds.

Note to Claimant: It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

SERVICE INFORMATION:

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN. Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Employment Appeal Board
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal. *No hay tarifa de presentación para presentar una apelación ante la Junta de Apelación de Empleo.*

UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si no presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelación de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en una acción final de la agencia y tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en www.iowacourts.gov/efile. *Puede haber una tarifa de presentación para presentar la petición en el Tribunal de Distrito.*

Nota para las partes: USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

Nota para el reclamante: es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.