

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

LARRY A YOCUM
Claimant

APPEAL 17A-UI-01954-DL-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

INNOVATIVE AG SERVICES
Employer

OC: 12/11/16
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(7) – Receipt of Vacation Pay/PTO

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed an appeal from the February 14, 2017, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that deducted vacation pay from benefits. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on March 15, 2017. Claimant participated. Employer participated through human resources generalist Sandy Kelchen.

ISSUES:

Did the claimant receive vacation pay or PTO at separation?
Is that amount deductible from benefits, and if so, for what period?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed through December 9, 2016. At the time of separation he had accumulated but unused paid time off (PTO) in the gross amount of \$1,235.08 equivalent to 51.44 hours. The employer did not designate the period of time to which the PTO was to be applied. Claimant reported the PTO during the first week of benefits claimed the week-ending December 17, 2016, and received no benefits. The employer also paid him the equivalent of three weeks' severance pay in two payroll periods in the gross amounts of \$1,920.68 and \$960.34. Claimant was not required to sign a waiver of rights. He did not report severance pay during the two weeks-ending December 31, 2016, and was paid gross unemployment insurance benefits of \$447.00 for each of the two weeks totaling \$894.00. He found other employment and reported gross wages of \$576.00 for the week-ending January 7, 2017, and received no unemployment insurance benefits. He did not file any other weekly continued claims.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the vacation pay/PTO was deducted for the correct period.

Iowa Code section 96.5(7) provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits: ...

7. Vacation pay.

a. When an employer makes a payment or becomes obligated to make a payment to an individual for vacation pay, or for vacation pay allowance, or as pay in lieu of vacation, such payment or amount shall be deemed "wages" as defined in section 96.19, subsection 41, and shall be applied as provided in paragraph "c" hereof.

b. When, in connection with a separation or layoff of an individual, the individual's employer makes a payment or payments to the individual, or becomes obligated to make a payment to the individual as, or in the nature of, vacation pay, or vacation pay allowance, or as pay in lieu of vacation, and within ten calendar days after notification of the filing of the individual's claim, designates by notice in writing to the department the period to which the payment shall be allocated; provided, that if such designated period is extended by the employer, the individual may again similarly designate an extended period, by giving notice in writing to the department not later than the beginning of the extension of the period, with the same effect as if the period of extension were included in the original designation. The amount of a payment or obligation to make payment, is deemed "wages" as defined in section 96.19, subsection 41, and shall be applied as provided in paragraph "c" of this subsection 7.

c. Of the wages described in paragraph "a" (whether or not the employer has designated the period therein described), or of the wages described in paragraph "b", if the period therein described has been designated by the employer as therein provided, a sum equal to the wages of such individual for a normal workday shall be attributed to, or deemed to be payable to the individual with respect to, the first and each subsequent workday in such period until such amount so paid or owing is exhausted. Any individual receiving or entitled to receive wages as provided herein shall be ineligible for benefits for any week in which the sums, so designated or attributed to such normal workdays, equal or exceed the individual's weekly benefit amount. If the amount so designated or attributed as wages is less than the weekly benefit amount of such individual, the individual's benefits shall be reduced by such amount.

d. Notwithstanding contrary provisions in paragraphs "a", "b", and "c", if an individual is separated from employment and is scheduled to receive vacation payments during the period of unemployment attributable to the employer and if the employer does not designate the vacation period pursuant to paragraph "b", then payments made by the employer to the individual or an obligation to make a payment by the employer to the individual for vacation pay, vacation pay allowance or pay in lieu of vacation shall not be deemed wages as defined in section 96.19, subsection 41, for any period in excess of one week and such payments or the value of such obligations shall not be deducted for any period in excess of one week from the unemployment benefits the individual is otherwise entitled to receive under this chapter. However, if the employer designates more than one week as the vacation period pursuant to paragraph "b", the vacation pay, vacation pay allowance, or pay in lieu of vacation shall be considered wages and shall be deducted from benefits.

e. If an employer pays or is obligated to pay a bonus to an individual at the same time the employer pays or is obligated to pay vacation pay, a vacation pay allowance, or pay in lieu of vacation, the bonus shall not be deemed wages for purposes of determining benefit eligibility and amount, and the bonus shall not be deducted from unemployment benefits the individual is otherwise entitled to receive under this chapter.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.16(3) provides:

(3) If the employer fails to properly notify the department within ten days after the notification of the filing of the claim that an amount of vacation pay, either paid or owed, is to be applied to a specific vacation period, the entire amount of the vacation pay shall be applied to the one-week period starting on the first workday following the last day

worked as defined in subrule 24.16(4). However, if the individual does not claim benefits after layoff for the normal employer workweek immediately following the last day worked, then the entire amount of the vacation pay shall not be deducted from any week of benefits.

The general policy underlying the deductibility of vacation pay/PTO from benefit eligibility is “that even though one is unemployed during certain weeks, he or she is not entitled to unemployment benefits for weeks if receiving or having received vacation pay therefor.” *Lefebure Corp. v. Iowa Dep’t of Job Serv.*, 341 N.W.2d 768, 771 (Iowa 1983); see also, 14 A.L.R.4th 1175 §2(a) (1982). Thus, “vacation pay” is deductible because it is considered a form of “wage,” which the statute further defines as any “remuneration for personal services . . .” Iowa Code § 96.19(41). The purpose behind all the deductible payment provisions of the unemployment law is to prevent claimants from receiving benefits for any week or portion thereof in which they are also receiving a wage substitute payment from their employer. The law allows employers to designate the period of time to which a lump sum payment is allocated so that claimants have to exhaust their wage substitute payments before drawing benefits. Because the employer did not designate a time period to which the vacation pay/PTO is to apply and the calculation was correct, the entire amount was correctly deducted from the first week of benefits following the separation.

The Unemployment Insurance Handbook at page 20 provides:
FULLY DEDUCTIBLE FROM THE BENEFIT PAYMENT

Each dollar the individual earns reduces their benefit payment by one dollar (dollar-for-dollar).
Vacation pay and paid time off
Severance pay

Example:
A individual’s WBA is \$400 and they receive a \$370 vacation payout for the week they are claiming.
 $\$400 - \$370 = \$30$.
\$30 is the payment amount for the week.

DECISION:

The February 14, 2017, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The vacation pay/PTO was deducted for the correct period.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/rvs