

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

GASTON KEATON
Claimant

WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES
Employer

APPEAL 21A-UI-09987-WG-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 08/23/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting
Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant/appellant filed an appeal from the January 26, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that found that the claimant was disqualified from receipt of benefits based upon his voluntarily quit of his employment without good cause. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on June 23, 2021. The claimant, Gaston Keaton, participated personally. The employer, Winnebago Industries, participated through its Human Resources Supervisor, Nick Krein.

ISSUE:

Did the claimant file a timely appeal?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

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

A decision that disqualified the claimant from receipt of unemployment insurance benefits was mailed to the claimant's correct address of record on January 26, 2021. Claimant is unsure when he received the decision but testified that he thought he received it in January or February 2021. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by February 5, 2021. The employer confirmed that it received the underlying decision on February 1, 2021. I find that claimant should have similarly received the decision on or about February 1, 2021. The claimant filed his appeal on April 8, 2021 via the online appeals website.

Claimant had numerous life events occurring in and around January 2021. Among the issues he was dealing with were his personal health, Covid-19 concerns, as well as his daughter's on-line schooling and care. I accept Mr. Keaton's explanation that he was very busy and his mind was filled with many concerns. Yet, I also find that the underlying decision was filed and mailed to claimant's proper address on January 26, 2021. I find no errors caused by the agency or the United States Postal Service caused the delay in filing of the appeal. I find that claimant had reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. Claimant received the decision timely, but he

failed to file the appeal until more than two months after the deadline for filing an appeal. Claimant offers no explanation that would legally excuse his delay.

The parties offered extensive testimony about the reason for claimant's separation from employment. Claimant asserts that he did not voluntarily quit his job and attempted communications with the employer. The employer provides detailed information about the dates and substance of various communications with the claimant. Ultimately, given the finding that the appeal is untimely, the remainder of the facts are moot and no findings are made.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes that the claimant's appeal is untimely.

Iowa Code § 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 § 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to § 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 § 96.5, subsection 10, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to § 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving § 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 § 96.8, subsection 5.

(emphasis added).

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. Bd. of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

The appeal in this case was filed online on April 8, 2021. 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 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. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal because he had received the decision in the mail prior to the due date. Claimant's 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 Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2). As such, 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The January 26, 2021 (reference 01) decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely and the decision of the representative remains in effect.



William H. Grell
Administrative Law Judge

July 06, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

wg/ol