

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

BRITTIANY M CALAWAY WHITEHURST
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 15A-UI-07480-LDT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

PILOT TRAVEL CENTERS LLC
Employer

OC: 11/30/14
Claimant: Respondent (6)

Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
871 IAC 26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

An appeal was filed from a representative's unemployment insurance decision dated June 23, 2015 (reference 08) that concluded Brittany M. Calaway Whitehurst (claimant/respondent) was eligible for unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment from Pilot Travel Centers, L.L.C. (employer/appellant). Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 9:30 a.m. on August 6, 2015. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system indicates that the employer/appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which a witness or representative could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing. Based on 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 on the employer/appellant not participating in the hearing?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The employer/appellant was properly notified of the scheduled hearing on this appeal. The employer/appellant failed to provide a telephone number at which the appellant could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

The representative's decision concluded that the claimant/respondent was eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedure Act at Iowa Code § 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.

Agency rule at 871 IAC 26.14(7) provides:

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 employer/appellant appealed the representative's decision but failed to participate in the hearing. The employer/appellant has therefore defaulted on its appeal pursuant to Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Rule 871 IAC 24.14(7), and the representative's decision remains in force and effect.

If the employer/appellant disagrees with this decision, a written request to reopen the record must be made to the administrative law judge 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 the scheduled time. Alternatively, the appellant also has the option to appeal the decision directly to the Employment Appeal Board, whose address is listed on the cover page of this decision.

DECISION:

The representative's decision (reference 08) dated June 23, 2015 is affirmed. The decision granting benefits remains in effect.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge
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Iowa Workforce Development
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Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/pjs