

**BEFORE THE
EMPLOYMENT APPEAL BOARD
Lucas State Office Building
Fourth floor
Des Moines, Iowa 50319**

JUAN M MARTINEZ

Claimant,

and

REMBRANDT ENTERPRISES INC

Employer.

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HEARING NUMBER: 13B-UI-03546

**EMPLOYMENT APPEAL BOARD
DECISION**

SECTION: 96.5-2-A, 96.6-2

DECISION

The Claimant appealed this case to the Employment Appeal Board. The members of the Employment Appeal Board reviewed the entire record. The Appeal Board, one member dissenting, finds it cannot affirm the administrative law judge's decision. The Employment Appeal Board **REVERSES** as set forth below.

FINDINGS OF FACT: On February 6, 2014, a representative's decision was mailed to Juan M. Martinez (Claimant). The decision was mailed to the Claimant's last known address as supplied to Iowa Workforce. The Claimant is a non-English-speaking person who did not understand the contents of the decision when he received it. He had to wait until his English-speaking son from another town could come to translate. By the time he obtained the translation, the deadline had passed. He went to the Iowa Workforce Development Center for further assistance and filed his appeal on April 1, 2014.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code 96.6 provides:

2. Initial determination. ... 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.

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 - but not conclusive - evidence of the date of mailing.

There is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and the Administrative Law Judge and this Board have no authority to change the decision of representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). The ten day period for appealing an initial determination concerning a claim for benefits has been described as jurisdictional. *Messina v. Iowa Dept. of Job Service*, 341 N.W.2d 52, 55 (Iowa 1983); *Beardslee v. Iowa*

Dept. Job Service, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979). The only basis for changing the ten-day period would be where notice to the appealing party was constitutionally invalid. *E.g. Beardslee v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979). The question in such cases becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Employment Sec. Commission*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Employment Sec. Commission*, 212 N.W.2d 471 (Iowa 1973). The question of whether the Claimant has been denied a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal is also informed by rule 871-24.35(2) which states that “the submission of any ...appeal...not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.”

Here, while the claimant literally received the claims representative’s decision, that document had no meaningful effect such that Claimant could timely comply given the language barrier. There is no question that due process principles apply in the context of hearings for persons seeking unemployment benefits. *Silva v. Employment Appeal Board*, 547 N.W.2d 232 (Iowa App. 1996). Two of the benchmarks of due process are adequate notice and meaningful opportunity to be heard. Iowa courts have held that due process requires “the opportunity to be heard at a meaningful time and a meaningful manner.” *Hedges v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 368 N.W.2d 862 (Iowa App. 1985).

It is clear that the Claimant required translation assistance in order to understand the decision in the first place, and to follow through with the decisions’ instructions. His failure to understand the claims representative’s decision due to the language barrier deprived him of a reasonable opportunity to assert his appeal in a timely fashion. For this reason, we conclude he has established good cause for the delay, and shall find his appeal timely.

DECISION:

The administrative law judge’s decision dated May 5, 2014 is **REVERSED AND REMANDED**. The decision of the administrative law judge is not vacated at this time, and remains in force unless and until the Department makes a differing determination pursuant to this remand. This matter is remanded to an administrative law judge in the Workforce Development Center, Appeals Section. The administrative law judge shall issue a decision on the merits of this case. The Administrative Law Judge may in the Administrative Law Judge’s discretion conduct an additional hearing if the judge deems it necessary to develop issues that were not adequately addressed in the first hearing because of the disposition of the issue of timeliness. After the hearing, if any, the administrative law judge shall issue a decision that provides the parties appeal rights

Kim D. Schmett

Cloyd (Robby) Robinson

Ashley R. Koopmans