

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

DARRYL LYLES
Claimant

D & D LAWN CARE LLC
Employer

APPEAL 20A-UI-01967-AD-T
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION

OC: 02/02/20
Claimant: Respondent (2R)

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Protest

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On March 3, 2020, D & D Lawncare LLC (employer/appellant) filed an appeal from the February 26, 2020 (reference 02) unemployment insurance decision that found employer's protest untimely.

A telephone hearing was held on March 20, 2020, at 11 a.m. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. Darryl Lyles (claimant) did not register a number for the hearing and did not participate. Employer participated through owner Donald Laughlin.

Official notice was taken of the administrative record, including the notice of appeal and statement of protest.

ISSUE:

Whether employer filed a timely protest.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

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

The Notice of Claim was mailed to the above address on February 10, 2020. That was employer's correct business address on that date. The notice of claim contains a warning that the employer protest response is due ten days from the initial notice date and gave a response deadline of February 20, 2020. The employer completed and signed the Employer Statement of Protest on February 19, 2020, and placed it in the mail at his local post office on that date. Employer's protest was postmarked February 21, 2020. The local post office is often delayed in processing mail.

The claimant's separation from employment has not yet been the subject of a Benefits Bureau fact-finding interview.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes that employer's protest was timely. The issue of separation is remanded to the Benefits Bureau for a fact-finding interview.

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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(1)(a) provides:

1. Except as otherwise provided by statute or by division rule, any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document submitted to the division shall be considered received by and filed with the division:

(a) If transmitted via the United States Postal Service on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark, or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark on the envelope in which it is 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.

(b)

(c) If transmitted by any means other than [United States Postal Service or the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES)], on the date it is received by the division.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2) provides:

2. The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document 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.

There is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and the Administrative Law Judge has 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.”

The delay in submitting the protest was attributable to the United States Postal Service. The employer completed and signed the Employer Statement of Protest on February 19, 2020, and placed it in the mail at his local post office on that date. Employer’s protest was postmarked February 21, 2020. The local post office is often delayed in processing mail. The administrative law judge finds the protest was timely, as employer completed and submitted it directly to USPS for mailing on February 19, prior to the due date.

DECISION:

The February 26, 2020, (reference 02) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Employer’s protest was timely.

REMAND:

The separation issue is remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for a fact-finding interview and unemployment insurance decision.



Andrew B. Duffelmeyer
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April 1, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

abd/scn