



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara calls on Cuomo administration to redouble efforts to fix unemployment system: Says it's become a desperate crisis for too many workers and families

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 11, 2020

| ISSUE: [UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE](#)



My offices have been fielding a flood of calls and emails from area workers who have lost their jobs and, for several weeks or longer now, have been unable to access and receive the unemployment assistance they need and deserve. The Cuomo administration needs to redouble the effort to get this essential aid out the door to everyone who needs it to support their families and survive this public health and economic crisis.

Elmira, N.Y., May 11—State Senator Tom O'Mara has joined his colleagues in the Senate Republican Conference to call on Governor Andrew Cuomo to fix New York's broken unemployment system.

O'Mara and his colleagues proposed a series of recommendations to remedy failures at the Department of Labor (DOL).

O'Mara said, "My offices have been fielding a flood of calls and emails from area workers who have lost their jobs and, for several weeks or longer now, have been unable to access and receive the unemployment assistance they need and deserve. It's become a desperate situation and it's past the time to get it fixed. The Cuomo administration needs to redouble the effort to get this essential aid out the door to everyone who needs it to support their families and survive this public health and economic crisis."

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, unemployment has skyrocketed to 1.76 million New Yorkers, and constituents, growing increasingly hopeless, have frantically called Republican state Senate offices reporting that they cannot get proper or timely assistance from DOL, or that they filed nearly two months ago and have not received a single check. Tearful callers say they cannot afford to put food on the table.

While the State has reportedly spent nearly \$88 million on high-end firm Deloitte to overhaul the DOL call system and for 200 firm employees, desperate unemployed New Yorkers still cannot get through or have legitimate filings stuck in the system.

Since DOL has been unable to fix or properly address these issues on their own, the Senate GOP is calling for the following immediate steps to be taken:

> The Governor must streamline application certifications and allow applicants to "certify" upon application, while still providing appropriate safeguards to help ensure that benefits

only go to eligible New Yorkers;

> In addition to the 3,000 employees currently working phones, the DOL must collaborate with other state agencies to train thousands more of the state's workforce, who are staying at home, to rapidly field calls and help New Yorkers file to receive benefits immediately;

> The State Comptroller, who oversees payments, contracts, and finances in the state, should be empowered to provide Emergency Oversight and Assistance to DOL;

> The Comptroller should conduct an immediate, fast-track audit of the DOL's procedures and administration of the program; and

> A State Legislative Joint Committee should conduct an immediate review and investigation into DOL's failed handling of unemployment benefits throughout the pandemic.