

It seems that many musicians who's work has been shut down, or who have a lost significant work and substantial income due to Covid-19 are having trouble getting unemployment compensation benefits. This appears to be the case here in Tucson as well as with Phoenix local 586 members. For many, going through the UI application page online is not usually enough to be successful. Since I've succeeded in getting unemployment insurance benefits, I feel the need to share what I've learned as a possible guide for others. While everyone's employment circumstances are unique, I feel that what I have to share here will help many people get their benefits. To have a chance at getting through the process, it is critical to:

- a) understand your rights under the Cares Act, and
- b) be able to effectively navigate through the obstacles in the Arizona unemployment insurance application process.

### **THE CARES ACT**

There are some very important takeaways to understand from the sources of information linked below. Read and listen carefully, and put your own employment circumstances into the context provided from these resources.

- The labor law firm Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld did a series of webinars on the Cares Act. The unemployment compensation portion of this webinar begins at 8:18. Some of this information is specific to California but all other information describing the Cares Act applies to us. LINK > [Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld](#)
- Labor Notes has a page describing our rights under the Cares Act > [LINK HERE](#)

### **ARIZONA DES UI APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS**

The regular application page for Arizona unemployment has not yet been set up to accommodate the Cares Act. It was set up in accordance with a set of unemployment laws and rules that have been superseded by the Cares Act. This makes the application process more difficult than it needs to be. If you have digested the material linked above and believe that you are qualified for unemployment benefits, I have some suggestions for the application process based on what worked for me. I was careful to use the legal language as described above in a message to the ombudsman's office voicemail. You could also try the email listed. My message was as follows. *"Hello my name is XX. I have experienced a workplace shutdown and substantial income loss due to COVID-19. I believe I am eligible for unemployment Insurance under the Cares Act, but I have not been able to complete the Arizona unemployment insurance application. Please help me complete my application so I can verify my eligibility and file for weekly benefits"*

The ombudsman called me back within two days and told me that an advocate would be in touch with me within an hour or so. The advocate called within the hour and was able to help me complete my application and qualify for benefits. I've included the direct contacts for the ombudsman and the advocate below, but I would try the ombudsman first as that is a higher level. Both of these offices are listed on the page that comes up in the following link as well as in this document below that.

<https://des.az.gov/about-des/contact-us/client-advocates-and-ombudsman>

## OFFICES OF THE OMBUDSMAN & CLIENT ADVOCATE

<a href="#">Office of the Ombudsman</a> Addresses issues regarding all DES Services/ Programs	Email: <a href="#">Request for Assistance</a> (Will respond within 48 hours) <a href="mailto:ombudsman@azdes.gov">ombudsman@azdes.gov</a> Mailing: 1789 W. Jefferson St. Site Code: 002A Phoenix, AZ 85007	Phone: <a href="tel:(602)364-2860">(602) 364-2860</a> Statewide toll free at: <a href="tel:(866)362-2837">(866) 362-2837</a> <a href="#">DES Program and Services Contact Numbers</a>
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If you cannot reach the ombudsman's voicemail, you can also try the UI client advocate below.

Unemployment	<a href="mailto:UIClientAdvocate@azdes.gov">UIClientAdvocate@azdes.gov</a>	<a href="tel:(602)542-5954">(602) 542-5954</a>
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### PREPARING TO FILE YOUR CLAIM

Before you file your claim or speak with the ombudsman, you need to assemble all pertinent information. I suggest putting it all in a single document. You will need:

- Your Social Security number
- Your Arizona drivers license number
- Your mailing address and the county in which you reside
- The names, addresses, and contact phone numbers of all employers/people you've contracted with in the last 18 months.
- Any gig work that you have performed in the last 18 months.
- A total for all of the income that you have lost or that you estimate you have lost from each employer due to COVID.

The advocate should be able to give you your benefit amount total, help you set up your pin and password, all of which which you will need to log into the account page on the DES website to apply for weekly benefits each week. Before weekly claims can be filed and accepted, the following must be complete: You will receive a letter that contains an estimate of 18 months of income and employment history. You will also receive a 'certification of understanding' that needs to be sent back immediately with your signature. The deadline for this certificate be returned is very abrupt. Hellofax is a good free Google app. for converting a pdf scan of your signed document to a fax and faxing it using the number listed directly on the DES UI certification of understanding form. Once they have your signature on the certificate, and you are approved, they should activate your account and you will receive a Bank of America debit card where you will be able to access your unemployment benefit funds. The card may not yet have a balance, but you will be able to create an account page with B of A to do things such as transfer the money or view the balances etc.

You need to file for weekly benefits ASAP! You can do this for each upcoming week starting on Sundays at 12 p.m. To do this you click on "file weekly UI claims" from the unemployment insurance website <https://des.az.gov/services/employment/unemployment-individual>

Once you get to the page that is imaged below as you file your weekly benefit, this is how the 'main questions' form needs to be bubbled in.

**File Weekly Claim: Main Questions**

\* 1. Were you physically/mentally able to work each workday from Sunday, March 29, 2020 through Saturday, April 4, 2020?  Yes  No ? You are able to work if you have no mental or physical condition that prevents you from working or accepting work. For example, if your employer shuts down due to COVID-19 but you could accept other work, you are able to work.

\* 2. Were you available for work each workday from Sunday, March 29, 2020 through Saturday, April 4, 2020?  Yes  No ? You are available for work if you do not have any restrictions that would prevent you from looking for or accepting full-time work when offered. For example, if your employer shuts down due to COVID-19 but you otherwise could accept a job if offered (e.g. you have childcare, are not traveling out of town, etc.), then you are available for work.

\* 3. Did you look for work from Sunday, March 29, 2020 through Saturday, April 4, 2020?  Yes  No ? DES temporarily suspended the "actively seeking work" requirement due to COVID-19. You will not be able to answer this question and the response will not be used to determine your eligibility at this time.

\* 4. Did you refuse any job offer or referral to work from Sunday, March 29, 2020 through Saturday, April 4, 2020?  Yes  No ? You are able to select "No" if you were made a job offer that puts you at risk of exposure to COVID-19 or plan to return to your employer when operations resume.

\* 5. Did you work or earn any money from Sunday, March 29, 2020 through Saturday, April 4, 2020, including part-time work, even though you may not have received payment at this time?  Yes  No ? Select "Yes" if you are working or being provided any type of monetary compensation for the weekly claim period, including, but not limited to regular wages, vacation, holiday, sick or severance pay.

Failure to report gross earnings may result in prosecution and payment restitution. The department regularly matches hiring information with employers.

\* 6. Have you returned to full-time work which will not require you to file any further weekly claims at this time?  Yes  No ? Select "Yes" if you started working full-time.

Failure to disclose that you have returned to work may result in prosecution and payment of restitution.

\* 7. Did you begin attending any type of school or training from Sunday, March 29, 2020 through Saturday, April 4, 2020?  Yes  No ? Select "Yes" if you are enrolled in school or enrolled in an educational or training program of any kind during this weekly claim period.

Next

The next page that comes up is not relevant to the Cares Act. You will be prompted to enter nothing here but instead to click through to the next screen. When you get to the Final button it will say "file your weekly claim". After you have clicked that, it will say "Weekly claim successfully filed" Funds should be available on your card as soon as the next day. No action needs to be taken to activate the \$600 Federal weekly benefit. That is automatically included.

**File Weekly Claim: Work Search**

#	Date	Contact Method	Employer or Website	Company Telephone	Type of Work Sought	Action taken on date of contact
DES temporarily suspended the "actively seeking work" requirements due to COVID-19. Click "Next" to move on in the application						
<b>Proceed through this screen - no entries needed</b>						
* Date:	<input type="text" value="-- Select --"/>	<input type="text"/>				
* Contact Method (select):	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Internet <input type="radio"/> In Person/Mail/Other					
* Website:	<input type="text" value="www.example.com"/>		<input type="text"/>			
* Company Name:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>			
* Type of Work Sought:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>			
Action taken on date of contact:	<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>
Remaining Chars: 500						
<input type="button" value="Add Work Search Entry"/>						

I cannot guarantee that everything described in this document will work for everybody the way it worked for me. But from what I'm hearing, there are people who have been rejected, or who have not applied in this way who are undoubtedly qualified. We hope you will find this helpful.