



COMMENTARY

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GUEST OPINION

Evers, DWD to blame for backlog in unemployment compensation

Administration failed to anticipate effects of COVID-19

By Sen. Duey Stroebel

The economic fallout from COVID-19 has devastated Wisconsin whether you are a Democrat or a Republican. According to the Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin's unemployment rate reached 14.1% in April, a number that surely increased in May. While unemployment claims shot up, Governor Evers' DWD failed to scale up operations to combat this growing challenge. This failure is not a matter of partisan politics as some have tried to make it. It is the reality on the ground that unemployed Wisconsinites are facing each and every day as they call the DWD hundreds of times for weeks on end without receiving any assistance.

The DWD currently has a backlog of hundreds of thousands of unemployment claims. The department has been slow to pay benefits, expand their unemployment hot line calling hours and reassign state employees to help with claims. This delayed response has worsened an already bad situation for Wisconsinites.

I certainly understand that the DWD faces significant challenges, but other governors acted proactively by expanding their hot line hours and reallocating staff resources to better address this challenge. The results are telling. Wisconsin was among the last states to begin processing the additional \$600 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation payments. In Minnesota, Michigan and Illinois, these payments began about three weeks before the first payments were made here in Wisconsin.

On May 27, Secretary Caleb Frostman appeared before the Senate Committee on Labor and Regulatory Reform. His testimony did little to explain the DWD's failure to this point. Instead, Frostman focused on inaccurately blaming out-of-date technologies and refusing to take responsibility. He was unable to answer questions about why the Evers administration did not anticipate that unemployment would increase dramatically as they prepared to shut down Wisconsin's economy.

Democrats have also indicated conservative reforms to unemployment are causing delays. Work-search requirements and other reforms were put in place to stop waste, fraud and abuse. Many policies including work-search requirements have been waived during this extraordinary COVID-19 situation. These excuses are simply an attempt to misdirect and avoid accountability for the failures of the DWD.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What would Jon do?

To the editor:
In recent weeks we have witnessed the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. Their tragic deaths, impossible to ignore no matter your racial or political identity, have brought attention to the inequities and implicit bias that people of color face in our communities. The protests we are seeing are a call to action for individuals to stand up against racism and be a voice against racial injustice.

One who stood up against racism and who was that voice was Jon Safran, a courageous ally and advocate who defended the rights of Frank Jude and many others. Jon used his power to give voice to the silent and help right injustices that were committed. Jon passed on May 18, but we now have an opportunity to honor his life and work by not being silent.

I have been thinking about the harm of racism in our community and, as a white woman with privilege, I often don't know where to start. Today, I am starting by no longer staying silent. While it may feel like we are far away from the protests, we need to address the emotional tax and institutional racism that people of color, who are our neighbors, friends, and colleagues, face daily. This means educating ourselves, our communities, and the organizations we work with about how to correct bias and upend inequities. This means standing up against racism that we see in a store, at a ballgame, in our workplaces, or in our schools.

I hope this moment gives us all the courage to stand up and be advocates and allies in our community, to defend against injustice when we see it, and do the hard work of empathizing and seeking to understand. We cannot be afraid to learn.

Just ask yourself, what would Jon do?

Krista Brookman
Mequon

Needed: virtue in government

To the editor:
As is my usual practice after dinner, I had my television tuned to a PBS station while cleaning up the kitchen. A documentary on China's long history was playing. A word attributed to the

he's talking about. Instead of trying to unite the nation he is purposely trying to divide us. He is actually cheering on the protesters in states with Democratic governors to further the division. But these protests are nothing more than Trump rallies, with people toting around their high-powered rifles, waving Confederate flags, and wearing their red MAGA hats. Just a few short years ago, the United States of America was looked up to all around the world. Today we are laughed at. This crisis has shown us the need for strong American leadership.

In 2016 we had a choice between a former U.S. senator and secretary of state and the guy from "The Apprentice." Unfortunately too many voters made a serious mistake and chose the TV star. On November 3, we must choose again. Will voters go with the hapless, dishonest, ineffective man currently in our White House, or will they choose Joseph Biden, the kind, dignified, and experienced former vice president? Let us all hope we don't get fooled again by Donald Trump. We don't know what the next crisis will be. But we do know that Trump will not be up to the challenge.

James Korthals
Cedarburg

Thank heaven for angels among us

To the editor:
I believe angels are always near, surprising how near.

As I contemplate my 94-year journey on earth I am certain God has sent his angels when I was not even aware. It's nice to be aware as I have been these last months especially, since January 15, when I suffered a stroke in the morning, giving Dr. Gibson at St. Mary's Hospital in Milwaukee time, within three hours, to get up into my head to remove the clot, causing the right side of my body, including the sight in my right eye, to come to life again with no paralysis. Full recovery will take from six months to up to a year to restore my body to what a 94-year-old duffer can be. I am doing fine, close to back (to) where I was — walking and balance the big mountains to climb. God is good. My wife, Elizabeth, 86, an angel with a mild form of leukemia and a 3-inch piece of metal inserted

significant issues and needs.

Serving others includes wearing face masks and respecting social distance so we cause no harm. There are hundreds of ways that we can serve others. Pick and religiously practice one or two of them and make that your new "normal" as you adapt to continuing change. Green Stamps are no longer in existence. There are now hundreds of television stations to choose from. The national anthem is no longer broadcast at midnight. Swimsuits are now required during swim classes. Yet, practicing "service before self" will always be "normal" if we choose to.

Curtiss S. Peck
Grafton

Trump an embarrassment

To the editor:
I sometimes have to chuckle at some of the things I read about the Republicans in our area. Any person with common sense or with their eyes open can see just how far they will go for power.

Now their latest claim is that mail-in voting is fraught with corruption, which is nothing short of nonsense.

For Pete's sake, Donald Trump voted by mail himself. So I guess when you think of it that way it actually does include corruption to a certain degree.

I have seen plenty of presidents going all the way back to Kennedy and I've never seen a president even close to the embarrassment Donald Trump has brought to our nation's highest office. I would list the reasons but would run out of ink.

VOTE in November!

Scott Karolczak
Mequon

Typhoid Mary was not a freedom fighter

To the editor:
After our sacrifices over the last months, it seems we have mitigated the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. With the heroic efforts of frontline medical workers and first responders, the massive mobilization of scientific