
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 53 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY SIMS, SANCHEZ, BENHAM, KINSEY, HILL-EVANS,
HANBIDGE, McNEILL, DALEY, HOWARD, FIEDLER, NEILSON, DEASY,
A. DAVIS, DeLUCA, LEE, OTTEN, ISAACSON, O'MARA, WEBSTER,
CIRESI, WARREN AND MADDEN, FEBRUARY 17, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND INDUSTRY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 Establishing a special bipartisan, bicameral legislative
2 commission to study challenges in the Pennsylvania
3 unemployment compensation system and issue a report with its
4 findings and recommendations.

5 WHEREAS, Swift delivery of unemployment compensation benefits
6 is essential in providing a financial lifeline to Pennsylvanians
7 who have lost jobs during the COVID-19 disaster emergency; and

8 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's unemployment rate currently exceeds
9 8% during the COVID-19 pandemic, and unemployment compensation
10 benefits have been a vital financial resource for hundreds of
11 thousands of Pennsylvanians who are out of work through no fault
12 of their own; and

13 WHEREAS, More than 2.5 million Pennsylvanians have applied
14 for unemployment compensation benefits since the beginning of
15 this pandemic, and as of December 5, 2020, the average number of
16 new weekly claims exceeds 40,000; and

17 WHEREAS, As of October 2020, nearly 70,000 unemployment
18 compensation claims remain pending in the unemployment

1 compensation system, and thousands of claimants have waited
2 weeks or months as the Department of Labor and Industry attempts
3 to examine and process an unprecedented number of claims while
4 investigating attempts at fraud; and

5 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's unemployment compensation system has
6 demonstrated an inability to handle the sudden substantial
7 influx in claims, with many claims remaining unresolved; and

8 WHEREAS, Identifying and ameliorating stumbling blocks
9 causing delays within the unemployment compensation system
10 serves both claimants and unemployment compensation examiners in
11 accelerating the processing of claims, increasing the efficiency
12 of the unemployment compensation system and releasing department
13 resources to combat fraud; and

14 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth's efforts to promptly deliver
15 benefits to qualified claimants has been hindered by outdated
16 systems, an insufficient number of staff and a high volume of
17 claims; therefore be it

18 RESOLVED (the Senate concurring), That the General Assembly
19 establish a special bipartisan, bicameral legislative commission
20 to study the delivery of unemployment compensation benefits to
21 claimants in this Commonwealth; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the commission develop reports to include
23 background information into matters relevant to this resolution,
24 make recommendations for the improvement of the unemployment
25 compensation system and propose legislation in furtherance of
26 its recommendations; and be it further

27 RESOLVED, That the commission shall consist of the following
28 members:

29 (1) The Attorney General or a designee;

30 (2) The Auditor General or a designee;

- 1 (3) The State Treasurer or a designee;
- 2 (4) The Secretary of Labor and Industry or a designee;
- 3 (5) The Executive Deputy Secretary of Labor and Industry
4 or a designee;
- 5 (6) The chairperson and minority chairperson of the
6 Labor and Industry Committee of the Senate or designees;
- 7 (7) The chairperson and minority chairperson of the
8 Labor and Industry Committee of the House of Representatives
9 or designees;
- 10 (8) The Deputy Secretary for Unemployment Compensation
11 Programs or a designee;
- 12 (9) The Deputy Chief Counsel of the Unemployment
13 Compensation Division or a designee;
- 14 (10) The chairperson of the Unemployment Compensation
15 Appeals Board of Review or a designee;
- 16 (11) The director of the Office of Unemployment
17 Compensation Service Centers or a designee;
- 18 (12) The director of the Office of Unemployment
19 Compensation Benefits Policy or a designee;
- 20 (13) Six administrators of regional unemployment
21 compensation service centers;
- 22 (14) The Deputy Treasurer for Fiscal Operations or a
23 designee;
- 24 (15) The executive director of the Pennsylvania Budget
25 and Policy Center or a designee;
- 26 (16) The chairperson of Philadelphia Legal Assistance or
27 a designee;
- 28 (17) The executive director of Community Legal Services
29 or a designee; and
- 30 (18) The executive director of the National Employment

1 Law Project or a designee;

2 and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the commission may hold informational meetings
4 to hear testimony from experts and others with knowledge of this
5 subject; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
7 provide staff support to the commission and assist with the
8 final report; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the commission issue an initial report of its
10 findings and recommendations to the General Assembly no later
11 than six months after the adoption of this resolution, with the
12 issuance of a final report no later than one year after the
13 issuance of the initial report; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the members of the commission shall serve
15 without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for all necessary
16 and reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their
17 duties; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That reasonable expenses incurred by the commission
19 be equally divided between the Senate and the House of
20 Representatives; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the approval of the chairperson and minority
22 chairperson of the Labor and Industry Committee of the Senate
23 and the chairperson and minority chairperson of the Labor and
24 Industry Committee of the House of Representatives, by action of
25 a majority of members of the committees, shall be required to
26 preauthorize all proposed actions of the commission which will
27 entail the expenditure of State funds and shall also be required
28 to approve all expenditures, including expense reimbursement
29 requests of commission members, prior to payment.