



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Unemployment Insurance Program Marks 70 Years

CRANSTON – The national Unemployment Insurance (UI) program marks its 70th Anniversary in August. The UI program was introduced as part of the Social Security Act of 1935, which was a response to the millions of unemployed Americans suffering as a result of the Great Depression. The Social Security Act established programs for Old Age Survivors' Insurance, Unemployment Insurance, Aid to Dependent Children, and Aid to the Crippled and the Blind.

The Unemployment Insurance program is a Federal-State partnership guided by both Federal and State statutes. The program receives administrative funding from the US Department of Labor and is financed by employer tax contributions. Each state administers its own Unemployment Insurance program. The UI program provides temporary, weekly benefits to workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own and who meet eligibility requirements established by the states.

The RI Department of Labor and Training administers the UI program in our State. RI enacted its own UI laws on May 5, 1936 and began paying benefits to the unemployed on January 1, 1938. In the early years of the program, customers were required to appear in person at local offices and wait in lines in order to file claims for benefits. Unemployed workers had to document their earnings and employers were required to report worker wages as claims were filed.

During the past seventy years, technological advances and innovation have allowed us to improve services to our customers. In 1988, the RI Department of Labor and Training implemented a wage record system requiring employers to report earnings of all workers to the Department on a quarterly basis. These wages are now available immediately when a claim is filed, speeding up the claims process. Customers are also no longer required to file a claim in person at a local office. They can file their claims from the convenience of their home utilizing the telephone or the Internet.

There were over 80,000 initial unemployment claims filed in Rhode Island in 2004. Of those claims, almost 12,000 were filed over the Internet. Customers eligible for benefits are able to call in weekly to the department's automated Tele-Serve payment system to claim their benefit payments, which can then be direct-deposited into their bank account. In 2004, over \$201 million was paid out to RI workers in UI benefits.

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Governor Donald L. Carcieri  Director Adelita S. Orefice

Employment services are also available to customers receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits. Rhode Island has six netWORKri offices available to provide job service assistance and training to help customers become reemployed.

“The Unemployment Insurance program has played an important income support role for many RI workers over the years,” said Director Adelita S. Orefice. “As we look to the future, we must continue to maintain the integrity of the program while identifying new ways to provide quality customer service to the citizens of Rhode Island.”

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The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training offers a wide array of employment and training services to both the general public and to individuals with unusual barriers to employment. DLT is ready to assist any job seeker, whether the goal is a first job, a better job, or a career change. Rhode Island’s work force is protected through the enforcement of labor laws, prevailing wage rates, and work place health and safety standards. Temporary income support is available to unemployed, sick, or injured workers and a comprehensive rehabilitation program is available to those injured on the job.

DLT is dedicated to the growth and competitiveness of Rhode Island industry, administering a variety of training grants, tax credits, and apprenticeship programs to help employers. Economic indicators and labor market information are available for long-range planning. The Agency engages in active outreach, helping large and small employers retain their best workers or retrain their existing work force. At no cost to the employer, DLT will also screen job applicants, post job vacancies, and help businesses institute cost-sharing programs that can avert layoffs.

For more information on the innovative programs and services available to all Rhode Islanders at the Department of Labor and Training, please call (401) 462-8000 or visit the web site at www.dlt.ri.gov.

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