

**To:** Vermont Legislature  
**From:** Michael Harrington, Labor Commissioner  
**Date:** September 29, 2020  
**Subject:** Unemployment Insurance Weekly Update

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**This report includes both new and continuing efforts. New information is in **RED**.**

### **Lost Wage Assistance Program (LWA)**

- Regular UI claimants have continued to submit their responses to the self-attestation question required under the LWA program. We will continue to issue payments regularly as claimants complete the attestation. Eligible claimants will receive \$300 for each week in which they are eligible. Claimants who do not have internet access but need to complete the attestation should contact the UI Call Center at 1-877-214-3332. More information about the LWA program can be found online at: <https://labor.vermont.gov/unemployment-insurance/lost-wage-assistance-program>.
- The first round of LWA checks were received by claimants the week of 9/21. An email was sent to claimants who were found to be eligible and explained what the payment amount represented. Additionally, there were 5,000 claimants identified in our system as potentially eligible but who do not have an email address on file. We have begun to notify these claimants in batches, to avoid flooding the UI Call Center with 5,000 callers at once. The message instructs them to call the UI Call Center and complete their COVID attestation over the phone.
- Claimants are able to complete their LWA certification by contacting the UI Call Center but it is important to note that because this benefit is being administered outside of our UI systems, the Call Center is unable to provide status updates on payment eligibility and/or payment status. Additional information regarding payment processing and when claimants can expect their LWA payment has been posted on our website and will continue to be updated to reflect payment processing going forward: <https://labor.vermont.gov/news/lost-wage-assistance-program-payment-update>
- *Note: There have been a number of issues reported regarding the LWA payments. These issues stem from the need to pull information from our mainframe and PUA systems, while also adhering to the federal guidance that insists that these payments be issued separate and apart from the UI process. This has led to a variety of payment issues, including improper payments, where checks needed to be voided and reissued. In some cases, claimants will need to pay back the federal benefit due to their eligibility status.*

### **Unemployment Extended Benefits**

- The Department has implemented the high Extended Benefits program which will provide an additional 20 weeks of benefits to eligible UI claimants, but only after regular UI and PEUC benefits are exhausted.
- The State of Vermont has triggering off of High Extended Benefits, as mentioned in my letter to the General Assembly on 9/28. The last week of High Extended Benefits will be the benefit week ending October 10. We will be communicating directly with claimants to inform them of their eligibility status. Based on preliminary data, we expect that we will likely trigger off Extended Benefits completely in late October or early November. Claimants who will be impacted by the loss of High Extended Benefits will be those claimants who have received 26 weeks of Traditional UI, 13 weeks of Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and 13 weeks of State Extended Benefits.

### **Claim Issues**

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- Claimants that contact the Claimant Assistance Center with an issue that cannot be resolved within 24-hours will be moved to the Inquiry Tool and a specialist will be assigned to their case for expedited resolution. The Claimant Assistance Center can be reached at 877-214-3332.
- As we approach our “busy season” with regular seasonal layoffs, we are tailoring messaging specific to claimants who will likely need to reopen their claim (rather than reapply), which will mitigate the number of claim issues and hopefully expedite processing. The pre-COVID high unemployment season typically begins in November and runs through March each year.

#### **UI Fraud**

- Individuals who believe a fraudulent claim has been filed using their personal information should notify the Department of Labor at 802-828-4101. This line is exclusively for fraud reports. More information about fraud and the ability to submit online reports is available at: <https://labor.vermont.gov/ui-fraud>.

#### **Claims Adjudications and Appeals**

- Our team of factfinders has launched successfully. This effort is designed to expedite the adjudications process by increasing the speed in which claim determinations can be made. Additionally, the Department has hired more staff in both the adjudications and appeals units to accelerate the processing of contested claims.

#### **Reimbursable Employer Charge Relief**

- The Department has begun to reimburse employers who are classified as ‘Reimbursable,’ and who had already paid the full contribution amount for the second quarter filing.

(Appendix Below)

## APPENDIX

**Helpful Links:**

- [Click here for general LWA information](#)
- [Click here for LWA payment information](#)
- [Click here for Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance information](#)

**Traditional Unemployment Insurance (TUI)**

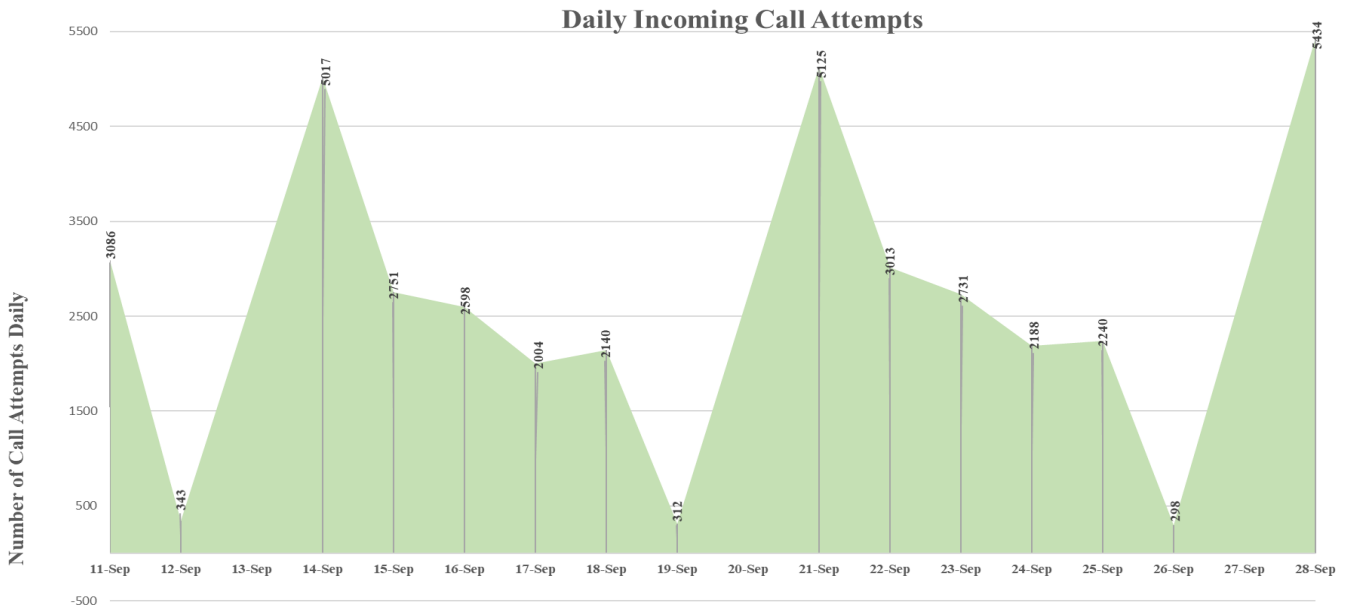
| <b>*Numbers as of Tuesday, September 29, 2020</b> |                      |   |
|---|----------------------|---|
| Total Initial Claimants Filed                     | <b>121,097</b>       | Total Number of Initial Claimants.  |
| Initial Claimants Eligible for UI                 | <b>81,653</b>        | Number of claimants eligible for UI.  |
| Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid          | <b>74,449</b>        | Number of claimants who are receiving, or have received, UI benefits.   |
| Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid      | <b>7,204</b>         | Number of claimants who meet basic eligibility thresholds, and who either have issues on their claim or <b>are no longer filing.</b>  |
| UI Trust Fund Balance                             | <b>\$257,087,226</b> | Trust Fund balance can fluctuate due to benefit payments, earned interest, employer contributions, and federal reimbursements. (Note: Balance as of 3/1/2020 <b>\$506,157,247</b> ) |

**Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**

| <b>*Numbers as of Tuesday, September 29, 2020</b> |                      |  |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Claimants Potentially PUA Eligible                | <b>30,810</b>        | Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system                                    |
| Claimants in PUA – Filed                          | <b>23,418</b>        | # of claimants who have completed the PUA application  |
| Claimants in PUA – Filed & Eligible               | <b>19,355</b>        | # of eligible claimants  |
| Claimants in PUA – Filed & Ineligible             | <b>4,005</b>         | # of ineligible claimants  |
| Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid       | <b>18,429</b>        | # of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.   |
| Claimants in PUA -Filed and Not Paid              | <b>926</b>           | # of claimants that have a payment pending, issue on weekly claim to resolve, or have returned to work and are not filing. |
| Total PUA Benefits Dispersed                      | <b>\$200,708,054</b> | Total amount of PUA benefits paid  |

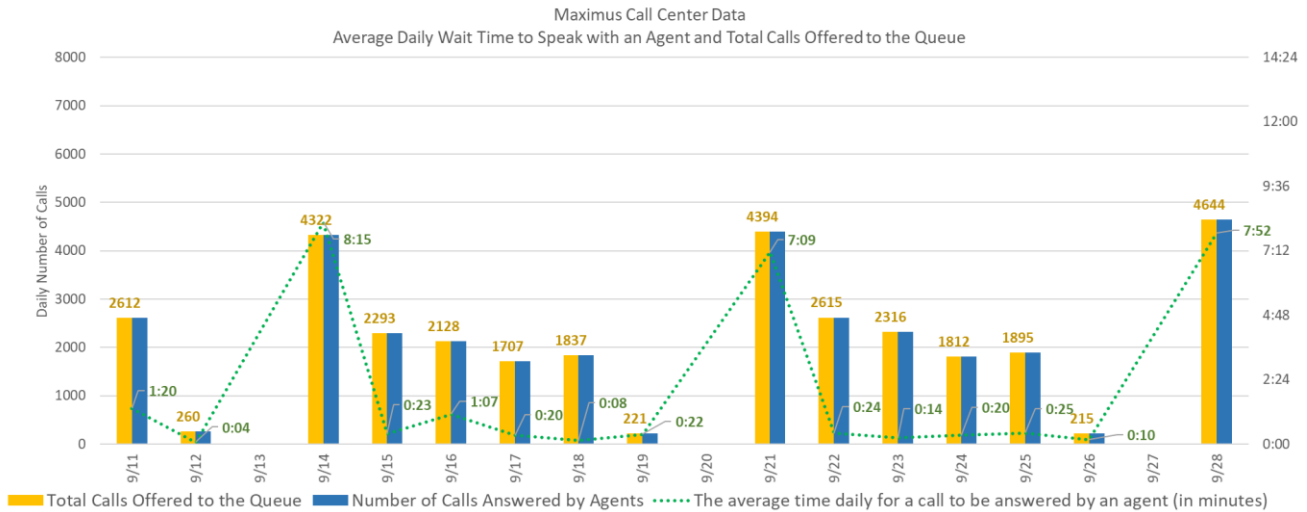
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**Figure 1.1**



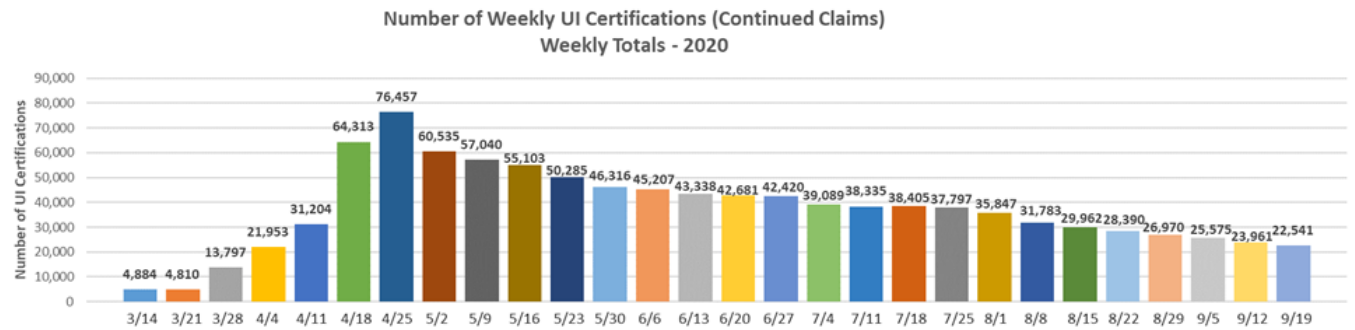
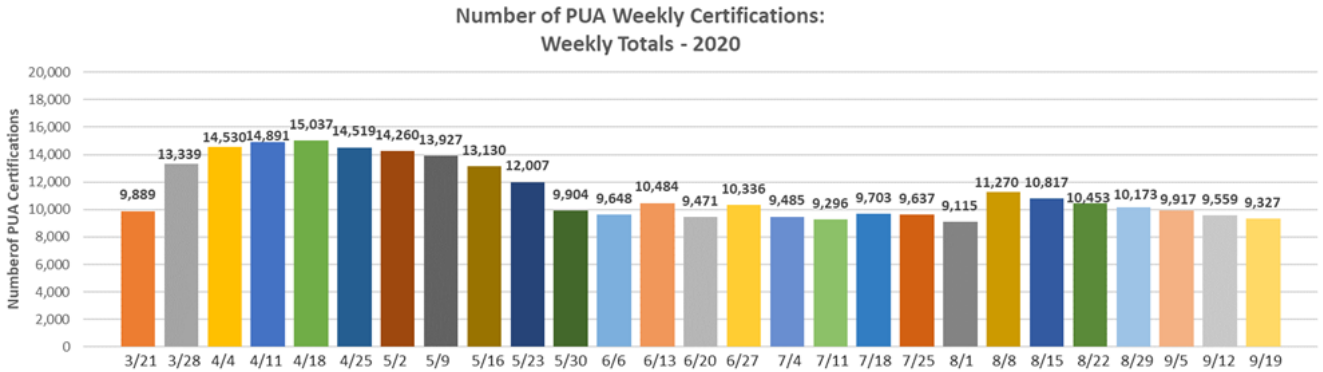
\*Counts include both answered and unanswered calls, multiple attempts from the same phone number and calls terminated by caller in the automated interactive voice response system

**Figure 1.2**

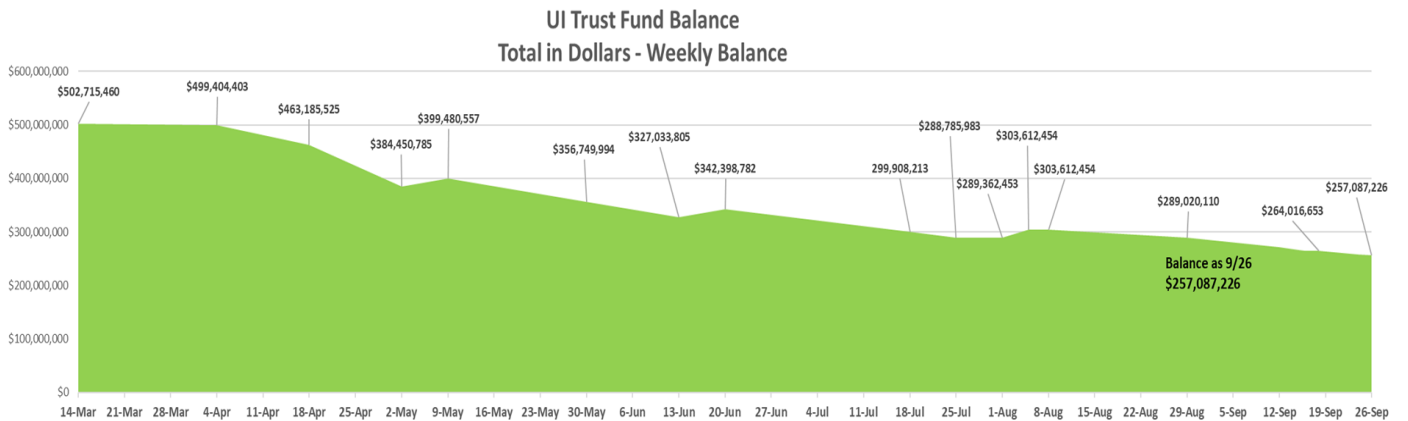


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**Figure 2.1**



**Figure 2.2**



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