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Department of Labor
Office of the Commissioner

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To: Vermont General Assembly
From: Commissioner's Office, Department of Labor
Date: January 5, 2021
Subject: Unemployment Insurance Weekly Update

GENERAL

- The Department is reviewing the new federal CARES Act which extends programs created under the original CARES Act. Further information is expected to be provided by the U.S. Department of Labor in the coming days and weeks.
- **CARES Act Extension Program Updates:**
 - **PEUC Program Extension Update:** The PEUC program extension (for regular UI claimants) is currently live. Claimants who have exhausted their benefits in regular UI can log into their UI Claimant Portal and continue filing for 11 additional weeks beginning with the benefit week ending January 2, 2021.
 - **PUA Program Extension Update:** The PUA program extension is not yet live. The Department is in the final stages of testing the system changes and expects the extension to be available in the coming days. Claimants are not yet able to file for the benefit week ending January 2, 2021 and will receive notification when the system has been updated. To accommodate for the delay in implementing these changes, claimants will be able to file for all available weeks from the start of the extension. Claimants will receive direct communication from the Department when they are able to file.
 - **FPUC Program Update:** All claimants (including those filing for partial unemployment) will receive the \$300 FPUC included in their weekly benefit payment from the start of the program beginning the benefit week ending January 2, 2021.
 - **MEUC Program Update:** This program is not yet live. The Department continues to review program requirements and guidance made available by USDOL. The Department will notify claimants when the program is live and what steps need to be taken for eligible claimants to receive the benefit. Many states are reporting this program could take 60-90 days to implement. Vermont has not yet made a determination on the timeline for implementation.

- CARES Act Extension Provisions:
 - The new CARES Act legislation extends PUA and PEUC benefits by 11 weeks for eligible claimants. Claimants will be able to receive these extended benefits through the benefit week ending April 10, 2021; however, no new PEUC or PUA claims will be accepted after March 14, 2021. Individuals who had previously exhausted their benefits under either the PEUC program or the Extended Benefits program, and are still unemployed, can log back into their UI claimant portal and resume filing beginning January 3, 2021.
 - The FPUC program was also reinstated with the passage of this Act and claimants do not need to take any additional action in order to receive the new FPUC benefit of \$300 per week.
 - This legislation also created what is called the Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC) program, which affords claimants filing in regular UI or PEUC, but who also have earned more than \$5,000 in self-employed wages for the previous tax year, to be eligible for an additional \$100 weekly benefit. This additional benefit is on top of both the base benefit and the \$300 FPUC payment. While this program is optional for states, Vermont has chosen to enroll in this benefit program for Vermonters.
 - USDOL has also announced that States will be able to pay benefits for the week ending 1/2/21. This means that there will be no “lost week” or lapse in benefits for PUA or PEUC individuals who were still in filing status for the benefit week ending 12/26/20. With that, the Department is working to implement the changes to both its legacy mainframe system as well as its PUA system. Eligible claimants may see a delay in their ability to file, but they will be able to receive benefits for the week of 12/27/20 – 1/2/21.
 - If an active claimant in the PUA program is unable to file for the benefit week ending (BWE) 12/26/20, it is likely because they have received the maximum number of weeks of the program under the original CARES Act. The CARES Act extension begins this week and eligible PUA claimants who have exhausted their original benefits will be able to file for the BWE 01/02/21 once the program has been updated with the federal changes. The new CARES Act extension does not cover the BWE 12/26/20 for PUA claimants who have already exhausted their benefits.
- Claimants who are able to do so, should be actively looking for work while collecting UI benefits. Vermont’s official work search is currently suspended, it is likely to be reinstated in the coming weeks. Employers across the state are reporting job availability in a number of sectors and industries and are actively hiring for a variety of positions. Prior to the Pandemic, UI claimants were required to conduct three official work inquiries each week in order to be eligible for benefits.

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- Our Workforce Development team is actively providing outreach and services to unemployed Vermonters to assist with re-employment. More information about the Department’s employment and re-employment efforts can be found online at www.labor.vermont.gov/jobs.

CLAIMS

- Our weekly numbers continue to show an increase in the number of initial claims be filed. This is believed to be part of the seasonal shift in employment. Traditionally, the week of Thanksgiving is the Department’s busiest week of the year for the UI Division.
- Claimants filing for unemployment continue to receive a weekly jobs newsletter with highlighted job opportunities available across Vermont. **January 4th Jobs Newsletter:** <https://conta.cc/3rS6Jye>

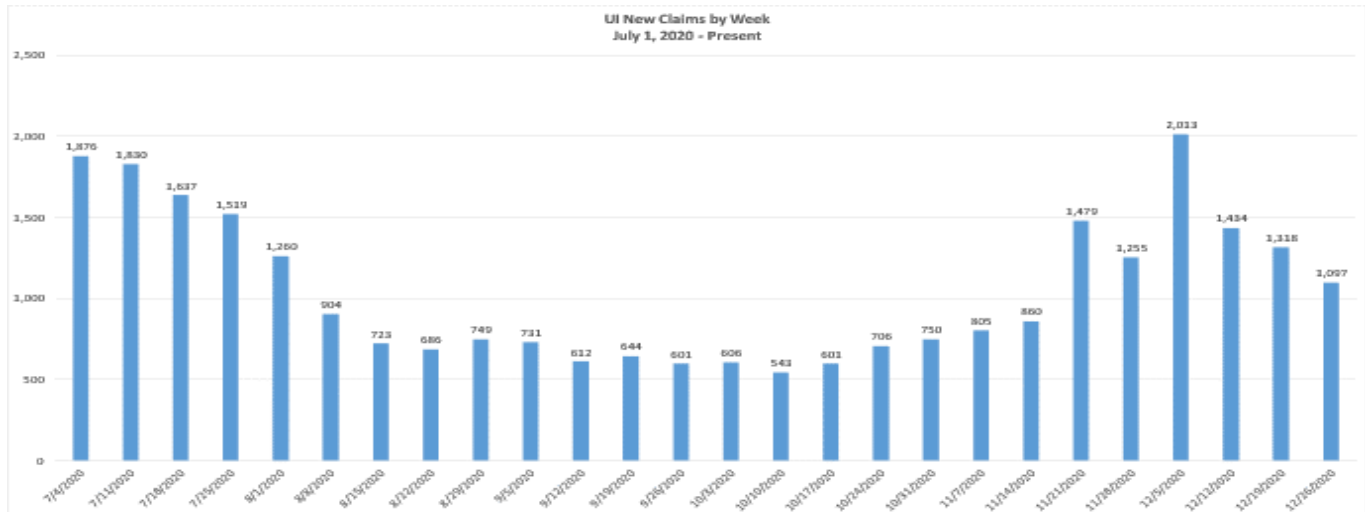


Figure 1

Continued Claims Filed						
Week Ending	11/21	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26
Regular UI	11,150	10,082	11,983	11,909	11,913	10,088
PEUC	9,598	8,963	9,825	9,833	9,724	8,589
EB	754	704	885	977	1,116	909
PUA	8,503	8,451	8,694	8,675	8,577	8,390
Total	30,005	28,200	31,342	31,394	31,330	27,976

Figure 2

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Continued Claims - All Programs

Regular UI, PEUC, EB, PUA
Total and Partial Unemployed

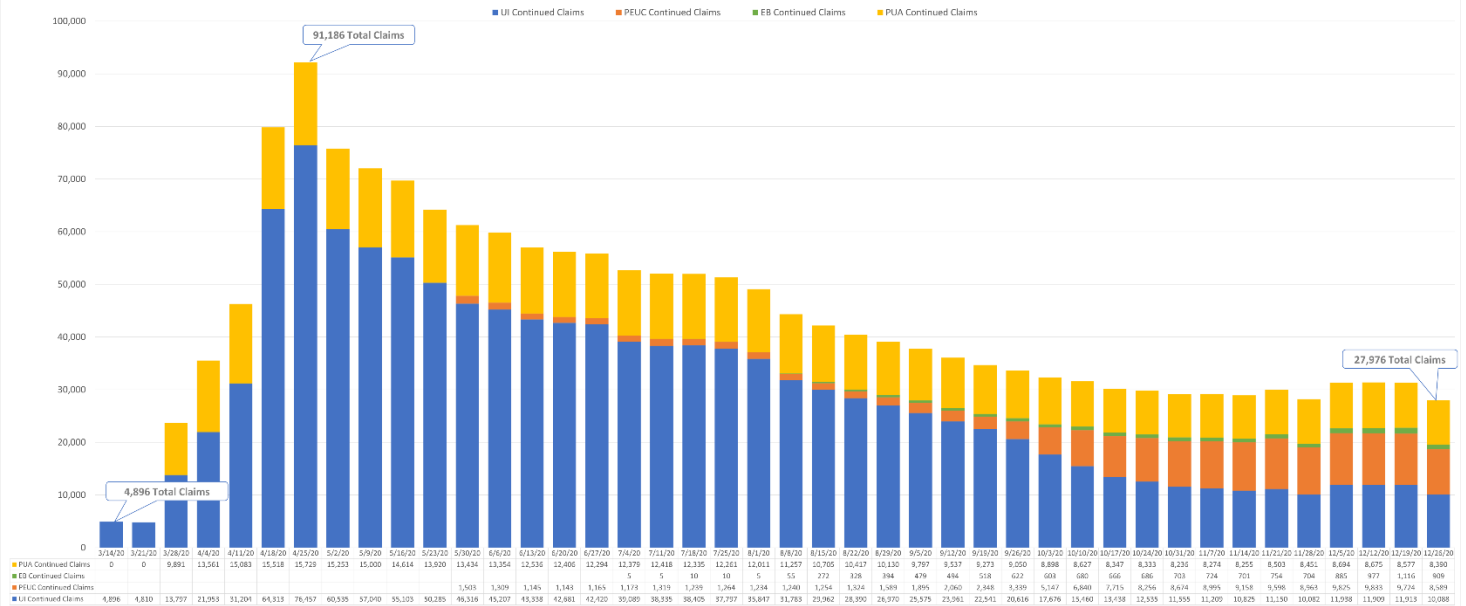


Figure 3

UI Continued Claims by Filing Week
(BWE 12/26/20)

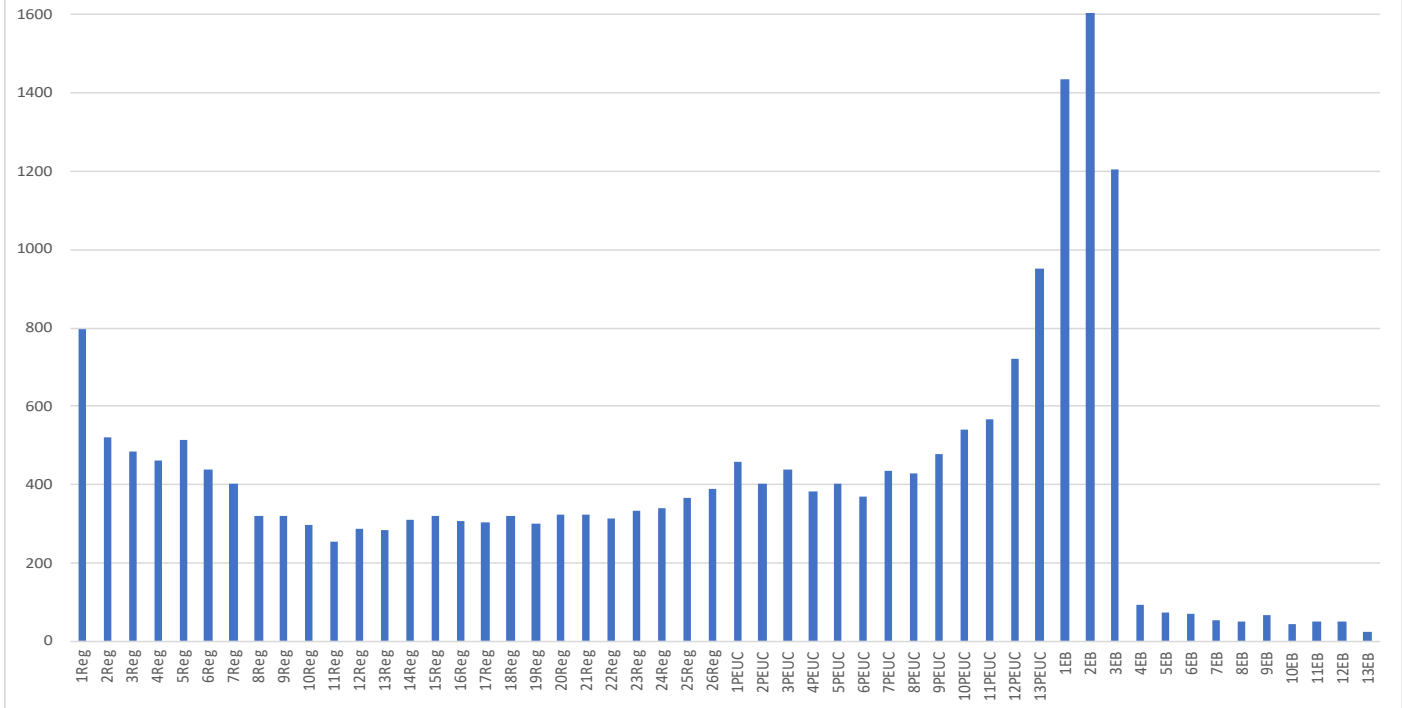


Figure 4

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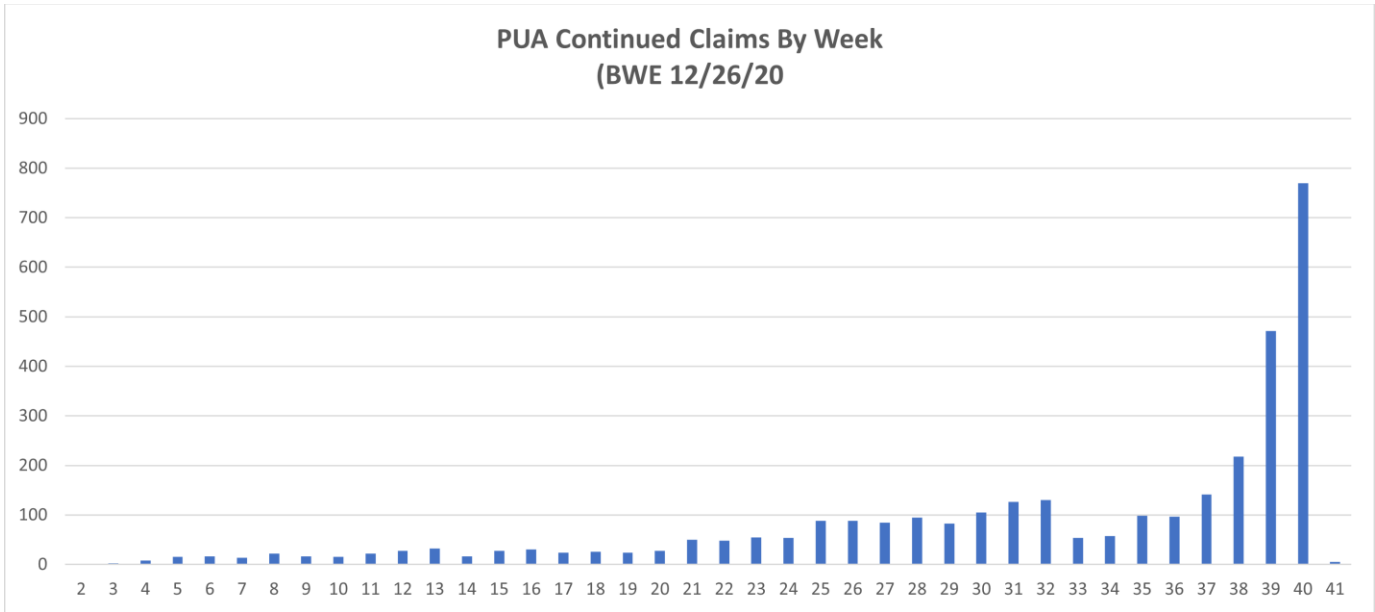


Figure 5

PAYMENTS

- The Vermont Short Term Supplemental (VSTS) benefit was paid out to all eligible claimants. In total, there were 33,509 claimants receiving the benefit for a total payment amount of \$14,606,500.
- We continue to process LWA payments as claimants certify and/or become eligible on a regular basis. Claimants who have not completed their certification or need to recertify may do so by contacting our UI Claimant Assistance Center. **As of January 5, 2021, the LWA program has paid out \$56,123,800 to roughly 35,000 claimants.**
- Regular UI is funded by state trust fund dollars, PEUC is fully-federally funded, and EB is currently fully-federally funded. Normally, EB is a 50/50 split between the trust fund and federal dollars. Additionally, the PUA program is fully-federally funded. The UI trust fund is funded through employer contributions.

Claims Payment Processing						
Week Ending	All UI Claims Paid	All UI Payments	PUA Claims Paid	PUA Payments	Total Payments Issued	Trust Fund Balance
November 21	20,441	\$6,803,665	8,005	\$2,537,754	\$9,341,419	\$255,487,068
November 28	18,745	\$6,138,744	8,387	\$2,782,380	\$8,921,124	\$252,170,953
December 5	21,870	\$7,451,856	8,211	\$2,638,931	\$10,295,096	\$249,016,877
December 12	21,160	\$7,206,483	8,126	\$2,367,865	\$9,574,348	\$247,023,458

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December 19	21,019	\$7,072,397	8,264	\$2,691,133	\$9,763,530	\$245,080,698
December 26	18,837	\$6,112,174	5,273	\$2,571,462	\$8,683,636	\$243,202,289

Figure 6

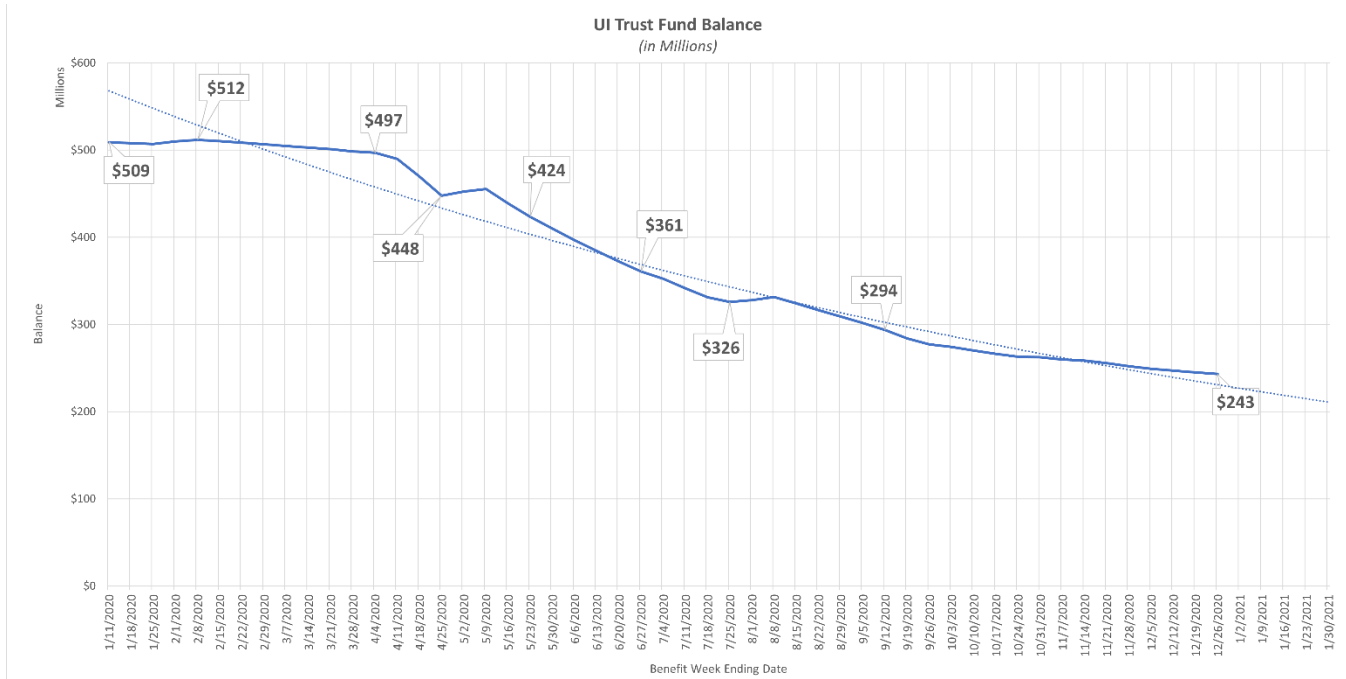


Figure 7

CLAIMANT ASSISTANCE CENTER

- We have received reports from claimants who have been experiencing long wait times. We are continuing to review the data and work with our vendor to increase the number of available agents whenever possible to mitigate extended wait times in an effort to better serve Vermonters. We continue to see high call volume and wait times on Mondays and most mornings. Claimants are encouraged to call later in the day on Monday or later in the week whenever possible.

Call Volume Summary			
Average Agents	Average Calls Per Day	Average Length of Call	Average Hold Time
130	4,990	9:37	19:46

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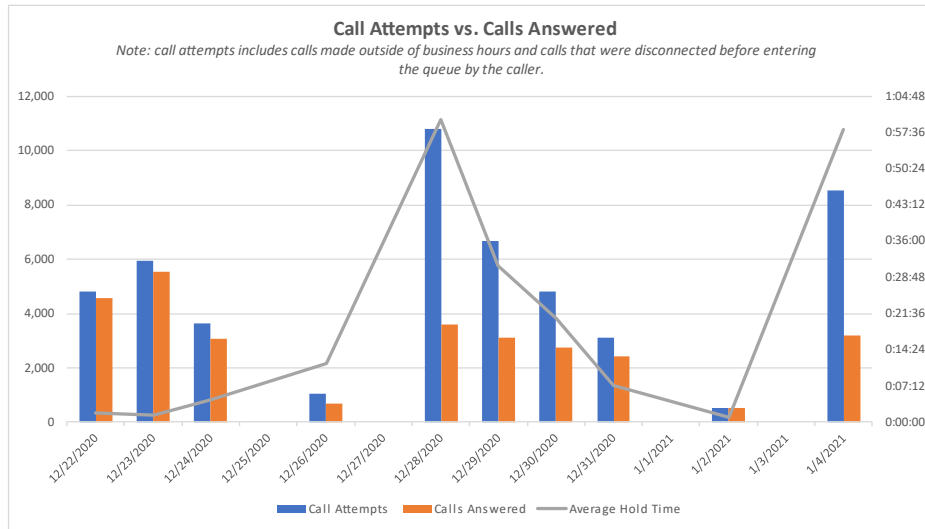


Figure 8

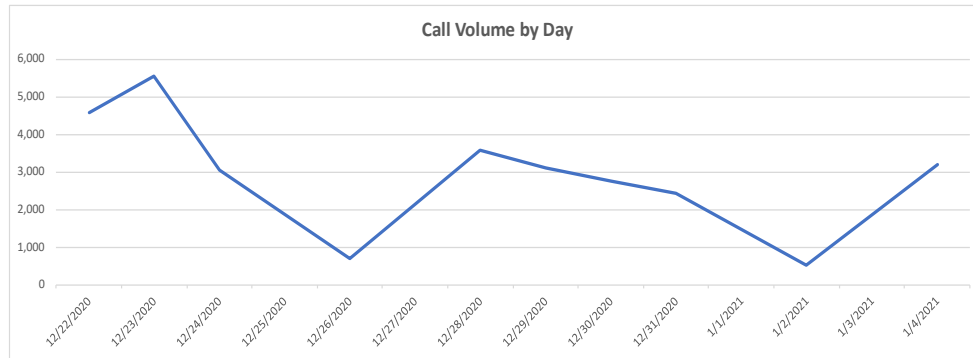


Figure 9

OTHER RESOURCES

- [UI “How-To” video library \(applying for benefits, reopening a claim, submitting weekly claims\)](#)
- [Workforce Development services \(online job board, workshops, events, and local staff\)](#)
- [Vermont Job Link](#)
- [CARES Act UI Extension FAQ \(as of 12/31/20\) \(NEW\)](#)

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