

Governor's Workforce Board RI
Rhode Island Employment Security Advisory Council (ESAC)
October 6, 2009

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members present: Roland Benjamin, Paul MacDonald, William McGowan, Sandra Powell, Nancy Roderick, J. Michael Saul

Committee Members absent: The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese, The Honorable Paul W. Fogarty

Others Present: Lisa D'Agostino, Michael Cronan, Barbara D'Amore, Raymond Filippone, Diane Gagne, Carol Gibson, Robert Langlais, Rosemarie Lemoine, Valentino Lombardi Esq., Donna Murray, John J. O'Hare, Janet Raymond, David Tremblay, Jason Bliss-Wohlers, Maureen Mooney

Call to Order

Chair McGowan called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Introduction and Remarks

Ray Filippone, Assistant Director of Income Support for the Department of Labor and Training, (DLT) welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided an overview of the agenda. He indicated the purpose of the meeting is to provide an overview of the Unemployment Insurance program and to consider the challenges of the current economic climate. He noted that the committee will be working on improvements for the program and developing recommendations. He stated that one major challenge is the borrowing of \$96m from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) to meet Unemployment Insurance payments. This loan with interest payments is due in September of 2011.

R. Filippone turned the meeting over to William McGowan, recently appointed Chair of the ESAC by Joseph MarcAurele, Chair of the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB). Chair McGowan reported that the ESAC is a committee of the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) and that he is the Vice Chair.

Paul MacDonald was acknowledged as a GWB board member also asked to serve on this committee. Chair McGowan noted that by statute, representatives from the General Assembly are members of this committee and include Senator Fogarty, Chair of Senate Labor and Dr. Corvese, Chair of House Labor. It was noted that Robert Kalakowski was in attendance as an observer for Senator Fogarty. Chair McGowan noted the importance of communicating with the legislature of the council's charge and to assist the DLT in improving the state's Unemployment Insurance system as it relates to matters of the trust fund solvency and benefits. He also noted the timeliness and significance of the GWB Strategic Workforce Plan for Rhode Island 2009-2014 in assisting in making the state more attractive to grow jobs and to attract business.

Expectations of Committee

Chair McGowan mentioned the proposed meeting schedule available to members in the meeting binders and noted there was a request to change the starting time. He indicated this issue would be discussed at the end of the meeting. He commented on the important work before the committee and asked members to participate fully as their schedules allow. He asked committee members to introduce themselves and provide some background information.

Director Powell noted the importance of the council's charge which is to assist the DLT in improving the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) system, particularly as it relates to matters of trust funds solvency, benefits and national best practices. She indicated that the committee will take a look at the historical data, and develop an understanding of how the UI system works in order to discuss recommendations for legislation. She noted that legislative changes will be required in order to receive the \$23.5 million in stimulus funds.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Overview

R. Filippone provided each committee member with a binder which included several resources and a detailed House/Senate Finance Committee Report for the benefit periods of 1/28/09 – 9/30/09. He reviewed the materials contained in the binder with committee members. A binder is on file as part of the meeting record.

R. Filippone gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Federal and State Unemployment Compensation Overview" which covered such topics such as: UI Program Origins, Federal and State Partnerships and Responsibilities, Current UI Programs in RI, RI UI Benefit Eligibility Criteria, UI Base Period Information, Weekly and State Benefits Amounts and Duration, Federal and State Emergency, and Extended Benefits and Federal UI Taxes. Due to time constraints, the entire presentation was not reviewed and will be addressed at the next meeting on October 20, 2009. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the meeting binder.

R. Filippone indicated that a booklet entitled: Highlights of State Unemployment Compensation Law was ordered and will be available to committee members at the October 20, 2009 meeting.

Throughout the presentation many questions and comments regarding UI were raised and addressed. R. Filippone offered to bring a glossary of terminology to the next meeting for committee members to use. Chair McGowan commented that in future meetings, the impact of UI compensation will be related to the employer. There was a brief discussion of changing the meeting time but nothing was resolved. Chair McGowan indicated he would discuss the meeting schedule with R. Filippone and notify committee members in advance of the next meeting.

Comparison Study with Other States

This information is available in the binder but was not discussed due to time constraints.

Challenges Facing the UI Program

As mentioned in his introductory remarks, R. Filippone noted the primary challenge is the repayment of funds from the Federal Department of Labor. Other challenges were not specifically stated during this meeting but will continue to be addressed in subsequent committee meetings.

Adjournment

Chair McGowan asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: S. Powell moved to approve. N. Roderick seconded the motion.
The vote was unanimous, the motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Mooney