Ian: Hello, and welcome to our live telephone town hall meeting. We just got a few folks on now. Thanks to those of you who dialed in early on our inbound participant line. You are joining a live telephone town hall meeting with California's 44th congressional district. We have your representative, Nanette Barragán, on the line here to answer questions and provide information to you tonight. We'll be focusing our conversation on unemployment benefits. We also have Ken Gomez, from California's employment development department. He'll be here to give you a brief overview of the CARES Act, and to answer your questions tonight. So, thank you to those of you who dialed in earlier. We're dialing out right now to 115,000 households across the district tonight, and we appreciate you joining our live forum. Thanks again.

I'll tell you over the next few minutes, how you can participate tonight. Then we'll jump right into our live forum. We'll spend most of our time tonight on Q&A. So, stay tuned for questions from your neighbors. And if you have a question of your own, I'll tell you how you can submit it for our forum. So again, welcome to this live telephone town hall meeting with California's 44th congressional district. We'll be joined in a moment here by your represent Nanette Barragán, and we're dialing out to 115,000 households across the district for this live forum tonight. We'll start our live event in a couple of minutes. In the meantime, I will tell you how you can participate in tonight's live tele-town hall. This forum is dedicated to reviewing unemployment benefits. That will be our focus tonight, and we'll make sure that we're taking questions on that topic for the next hour, to make sure that we can answer as many of your questions as possible.

We have Ken Gomez, from California's employment development department. He'll give you a brief overview of the CARES Act, and then he's here to answer your questions about your unemployment benefits. You may have questions on things like pending payments, partial benefits, and being called back to work. If you do, please press zero now and submit your question to an operator. Some of you are already doing that, and we appreciate you doing so. Again, you can press zero, now or at any time to submit a question on the topic of unemployment benefits to an operator. We'll give you the opportunity to ask your question live with Congresswoman Barragán and Ken Gomez, again from the California employment development department. So you can ask your question live by pressing zero and submitting it to an operator, and they'll put you in line to ask your question live.

Now, if you're not comfortable asking your question live, that's fine. Still press zero, still submit your question to an operator, and then just let your operator know if you prefer to have me read your question over the air, instead of bringing you live. I'm happy to do that if that's your preference. Whatever's most comfortable for you. So again, that's zero, now or at any time to submit a question on unemployment benefits and we'll be taking questions from the majority of our forum after we hear from your Congresswoman and from Ken, from the California employment development department. Now, for those of you who are just joining us, again, this is a live forum. Welcome to it. You can press zero to submit a question for our Q&A tonight. Another opportunity that you have is if you'd like to get email updates from Congressman Barragan's office, you can do that by pressing seven on your phone, speak to one of our operators, give them your preferred email address for receiving that information, and we'll make sure that we keep you updated on this topic and other issues that affect you in California's 44th congressional district moving forward.

So again, you can press seven on your phone to give us your email address, you get email updates from the Congresswoman. And one more thing here. If you are joining us and you are concerned about your call dropping, maybe you're in a bad service area, I'm going to give you a number that'll allow you to dial right back into the forum if your call drops. So, I encourage you to grab a pen and paper just to write down this phone number, but also to write down any important information that you hear. You'll be hearing a lot of information from Ken tonight and from representative Barragán, and if you hear any important information, we want you to have the ability to write it down, phone numbers, websites. So if you need that information, grab a pen and paper. And again, I'll give you our inbound participant line if you get disconnected from this call. For those of you listening in English, we are simulcasting this event in Spanish.

For those of you listening in English, our participant toll free number if you get disconnected is (888) 410-3427. Again, that inbound participant line, if you get disconnected from our English forum, is (888) 410-3427. If you're on our English broadcast now and prefer to join the Spanish simulcast and listen to the live Spanish interpretation, that Spanish inbound participant line is (844) 881-1317. So again, if you'd like to join in Spanish, that number is (844) 881-1317. We're going to go ahead and get started now. Thank you again, everybody who's joined our live tele-town hall. Again, you're on with a live tele-town hall with California's 44th congressional district. We're focusing our conversation tonight on reviewing unemployment benefits. Press zero to submit a question. Press seven if you'd like to get email updates from the Congressman. And I'll go ahead and start our live forum by turning it over to your representative, Nanette Barragán. Please go ahead Congresswoman.

Nanette Barragá...: Thank you everybody for joining me for this telephone town hall. It's specifically on unemployment issues. We're dedicating the entire hour to this issue because my office has received so many calls from people who have questions about getting unemployment benefits during the COVID-19 health crisis, and also from people who have problems receiving their benefits. So, today we're fortunate to have with us Ken Gomez from California's employment development department, that's the state agency that administers unemployment benefits for people in California. Now, we want to give you the information you need about getting unemployment benefits and also give you the opportunity to ask questions and voice your concerns. Before we get to Ken, and his update, I'm going to give you a quick little update about what's going on here in Congress. As you might know...

But before I do that though, for a second, we realized that currently the benefit for unemployment is set to expire on July 31st. That's the federal extra benefit of the extra $600 a week, is set to expire on July 31st. Last month, House Democrats passed a bill called the Heroes act, which would extend the benefits into next year, into January 31st. However, that bill has not yet passed out of the Senate and needs to be signed into law. So as of where we are today, there's still currently set to expire July 31st, but we're trying to move that bill, see if the Senate will act so we can extend the federal benefit of unemployment. So while this town hall will be all about unemployment, I just want to quickly let you know, I'm in Washington DC. Yesterday we had a hearing with Dr. Fauci on COVID-19. This week in the house, we'll be voting on the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act, to start to address police violence and move towards a more equal justice for everyone.

We're also going to be voting on the Affordable Care Act, which will lower your out of pocket healthcare costs, and voting on an infrastructure bill. So, today is focused on unemployment. We are going to have future town halls on those issues, but just wanted to give you an update. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Ken Gomez, our special guest from EDD, who's going to give a brief update. And then we're going to open it up to your questions on unemployment and unemployment benefits. Ken, thank you for joining us.

Ken Gomez: Yes. And thank you for the invitation Congressman Barragán. Good evening, and welcome everyone. I'd like to start by just thanking everyone for participating today. This is a really great opportunity for the employment development department to connect with our local constituents here in Southern California, and to provide you with some important information about the CARES Act, but more importantly, to allocate enough time to answer your questions. We do realize that being unemployed is new to many of you. And we want to make sure that you have a good, basic understanding of the benefits provided by the CARES Act. So, I'm going to go ahead and start there. As the Congresswoman mentioned, the stimulus payment of $600 per week is scheduled to end at the end of July. I'm very encouraged to hear that efforts are underway to extend that, but we do want to make sure that our customers are aware that this is automatic. You do not have to apply separately for the stimulus payment. It is automatically added to your weekly benefit amount through the end of July.

It also applies to almost all of our UI claims, which include the regular benefit type claims, the pandemic unemployment assistant claims, special claims such as work sharing, which is a great alternative for employers to avoiding layoffs, and our special pandemic extension. So, that's one component of the CARES Act that applies to, I would say 99% of all of our claimants. I wanted to start with that. Next up, if you're on a regular unemployment insurance claim, and you run out of benefits, or are about to run out of benefits, you could be eligible for an additional 13 weeks of extended benefits, we call it the pandemic extension. This is filed automatically for you by the EDD if you began your initial claim on or after June 2nd of last year. Keep in mind, this particular extension went into effect on March 29th, and it's set to expire at the end of December. Again, the $600 weekly stimulus applies to this particular extension through the end of July.

We are aware that some of our customers are just about ready to exhaust their current benefits, once your claim gets down to a zero balance, we will automatically file the extension for you. We're also looking at other options in terms of extensions. There is the possibility that the state with the federal government, may authorize additional extensions. So, we do encourage you to check our website on a regular basis for the latest updates on those programs. The next program, I really wanted to cover, something that's very new for all of us, including the EDD, and that's pandemic unemployment assistance program. And what this is, it's a program for customers that are not normally eligible to get regular UI benefits work or extended benefits. This would be for example, your business owners, your self-employed, independent contractors. It's also available to those claimants who had a regular UI claim, that have exhausted all of their benefits and extensions. We also extend this particular program to individuals who have limited work history and those who could not begin a new job due to COVID-19.

So you're probably wondering what does a limited work history mean. To qualify for a regular claim, You have to earn a certain amount of W2 wages. If you don't, then you will not be eligible for a regular UI claim, but you could be eligible for the pandemic unemployment assistance claim known as PUA. This provides up to 39 weeks of benefits with no waiting period, it applies between February 2nd and the end of the year. Again, the stimulus payment of $600 applies to the end of July. And because we got a late start accepting applications, when you file for this particular type of a claim, it's so important that you indicate the very first day that you or your business was impacted by the Coronavirus, so that we can make your claim retroactive to that date. It's very, very important. A thing to keep in mind is that we wanted to roll this out as quickly as possible, so we did have to roll this out in phases. Phase one, guaranteed everyone the minimum rate of 167 per week again, plus the stimulus during the time that it applies.

Now, we're just about completed phase two, where we're going back in and looking at all of the claimants that indicated that they made above $17,500 to see if we can increase that weekly amount from 167 up to and including our maximum of $450 per week. So, if you fall into that category, you will be notified by mail and it will be reflected on your UI online account as well. But just those three elements to be aware of. Also, we've received some comments from our customers, they prefer text messaging, timely communication. We're all for that. So, we've recently began sending text messages to all of our claimants, to let them know when their claim has been number one, received and filed, when their first payment has been made, if an extension has been filed on their behalf. We also notify our customers that need to provide identity documents to us, to be on the lookout for a special form that will be coming to them via US Mail. And once we receive the documents back from our customers, we'll send them a text message to confirm that we received their documents.

Another feature, if you need information off our website is we do have a new eddvirtualagent@edd.ca.gov. You can type in your general question that is, and they'll provide you with some basic information about the program. So, let's go ahead and get started with the questions. For confidentiality reasons, please note that we can't discuss individual claims or situations, but we can do our very best to talk about general situations. Okay. So our first caller is Diane, and she's asked, her account is locked and needs help getting in. Diane, you're not-

Ian: Let me go ahead and bring Diane live here so she can ask her question. Thank you Ken. One sec. Hey Diane, go ahead.

Diane: Hi. How are you? So I was awarded... Okay. I'm a realtor. And when I filled everything out, it asked me about 1099, if I had a 1099, and it's been 18 months not yet since I had worked a Christmas job, but instead of putting yes on there, I put no, and I went ahead with the independent contractor and put what I had made 11,000. So, then I saw I was supposed to fill it out a whole different way that I was in a union and all this, but anyways, I still got the letter that I got the award letter. And I did get the card, and then I did get paid. It looked like it was 600, 600, 167, 167. The total was 1,534. That was it. That day that I got that card, and that I could still never log in. I was never able to log in on my UI online account.

I even got an email from them that day I got the card, I could never log in. I still, to this day, can't log in to certify. I got one thing in the mail to certify, I did sign no, on everything. And then I realized a few weeks had gone by, and I couldn't get online to certify. So, still I'm locked out. I am blocked. I can't reset my password, they won't send it to me. So, today I tried to set up a new account and of course, because of your social security, they asked me, "Had you had it in the last 12 months, unemployment?" I put yes. So they wouldn't let me use the new email. "You already have an account." So then I tried my other email, and by putting no, and they go by your social security. So I still, in both of those emails, I instantly got a reset password, but my original email-

Ian: All right. Diane, let's get Ken to answer here. Thank you Diane.

Diane: But what do I do if I'm locked out?

Ian: Let me give it to Ken to answer.

Ken Gomez: Okay, Diane. First of all, I'm glad to hear that you did receive your payment and your debit card, because that's the first step to continuing your benefits with the EDD. I know that this can be an issue for some people when the account is locked. Normally, it resets after a certain period of time and you can go back in. What we're needing to make sure of is that you're using the exact email address that you used originally when you set up the account. If you are, and you still need some assistance, I have a few options for you. We have a special UI online assistance center, and they can provide technical support. They are available every day of the week from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM. And I'm going to give you their number. It's (833) 978-2511. And they can take a look at your profile to see what is blocking you from getting back into your account.

The other thing that I might encourage you to do until you can resolve this, because we really would like to get you paid. So, if you could kindly submit your certifications by phone, that would be great. It's very easy. It's a self service line that's available 24 hours a day. And all you have to do is dial this toll free number. It's (866) 333-4606. And if this is your first time using, they're actually going to ask for your social, and for you to select a four digit pin number. It's very simple to register for it. So once you're in, you can use what we call EDD Tele-Cert, in lieu of the online certification process. It's just as fast in terms of payment processing. However, because they repeat your answers back to you, it does take a little bit longer than if you were just doing it online. So, I would recommend those two things, contacting our UI online assistant center to get your password issue resolved and your access issue resolved. And so that we can bring it up to speed with your payments. In the interim, I suggest using EDD Tele-Cert to get caught up with your certification. Thank you.

Ian: Perfect. Yeah. Thank you, Ken. Appreciate you. Let's see. Let's go on. I want to make sure the Congresswoman doesn't have anything to say before we move onto our next question here. Congresswoman?

Nanette Barragá...: No, I think we're good for the next question.

Ian: Sounds good. All right. A quick reminder, you can press zero to submit a question. If you want to get email updates from Congress from Barragan's office, you can do that by pressing seven on your phone. And we'll go ahead and go to our next question here from Fidel, in Compton. Hey Fidel, welcome to our call. What's your question? Fidel, can you hear me? All right, I'll go ahead and read his question here. Ken, he says he has called four times to employment in the last month, the phone keeps hanging up and never gets a call back after leaving a message. Can you take that one for us, please?

Ken Gomez: Yes, I'd be happy to. First of all, let me apologize. I know that we've had tremendous call volume and it's been very, very difficult to reach us by phone. It would be helpful if I knew what his question pertained to so I could guide him to the right number. What I would share at this point, it sounds like he's dropped off, is if it's something specific to his claim or situation, he would need to continue to call our normal toll free number, which is (800) 300-5616, that is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 12 noon. And he can speak to a representative. Another option would be to have him log into his UI online account. From the home page, there's a contact us link. You can submit a secured question and we can research it and get back to him.

That process generally takes about three to five business days for a response, unless further investigation is needed. And then lastly, if it's something that just he has a basic question about he has a payment question, or something regarding UI online, I would certainly refer him to the UI online assistance center, which is at (833) 978-2511 number. And again, that's daily from 8:00 to 5:00 exclusive of state holidays. So again, I apologize for the busyness there. We are doing the best we can under the circumstances. We have hired about 3000 new staff to help man the phones, but we still have 2000 positions still to fill. So, if anybody's interested out there, I can provide information later on at the end regarding how to apply for a state job. Thank you.

Ian: Thank you again, Ken. Much appreciated. Thank you for the question from Fidel. And a reminder here. It'll be helpful if you grab a pen and paper to write down any important information you hear. As you've heard, Ken's read a few phone numbers that will be helpful for you to make sure that you're getting your unemployment benefits. And again, for those of you who've joined us a little late here, that will be the focal point of our call today. We'll be discussing unemployment benefits, and we have Ken Gomez here from California employment development department, as well as your Congresswoman, Nanette Barragán on the line. So, we'll go to our next question right away, and give Denzel an opportunity here. And I'll also ask our callers, make sure you keep your comments as brief as possible so we can get to as many questions as possible in the time we have. Hey Denzel, thank you so much for waiting. Go ahead with your question please, sir.

Denzel: All right. No problem. Hi Ken, my question or my issue is that I was let go of my job. I filed for employment in April, and never heard anything. I did have to move back to Houston, Texas due to me losing my job, but I did provide both my California address and Houston address. So, I filed on April 9th and got a claim number and a log in, but never got an account number, never received anything in the mail. I did the same thing in May, a month after, got another claim number, same thing, just no contact at all. No email, no phone, no certified mail. And I usually spend my day, every day calling the 300 number. And I even noticed that it'll give me a prompt one time that'll say the call can't go through. And then if I keep calling and calling and calling, then I get another voice, that'll get me all the way through to ask what my social security number is, and then it hangs up. So, I'm just left in the open right now with no type of communication at all.

Ken Gomez: Okay. Thanks so much. I apologize for that. It really does seem like an excessive time has lapsed between when you first attempted to file your claim and now. This would be something that we'd really want to have the conversation with you. And what I might recommend is, after the call, make contact with Congresswoman Barragán's staff and leave your contact information, and we'll try to see if we can investigate that for you, because really on a regular claim, it takes only about three weeks from when you file until you get your debit card.

The pandemic claims of course take a little bit longer because they're filed manually, maybe adding another week to the process. But you started several months ago, and that does concern me. So, there's something that is preventing that claim from going through, and we really need to have a conversation with you, because if we simply might just need additional information. And we do appreciate you updating your address and contact information, because we realized during times like this, people do have to make life changes. And we just want to be able to know where to reach you should something come up throughout the life cycle of your claim. Thank you.

Ian: Got it. Thank you so much, Ken.

Nanette Barragá...: And Ian, if I may.

Ian: Of course.

Nanette Barragá...: This is the Congresswoman. Let me just make sure I give out the number to my office. It's (310) 831-1799. (310) 831-1799. That's my district office phone number to contact my staff. If somebody who's on this call wants us to specifically follow up on their case, they can call our office and we will do that for them. Thank you.

Ian: Perfect. Thank you so much. Appreciate you Congresswoman, thank you. We've got our next question. Thank you Denzel, for your question. We've got our next question coming here from Ken. He's asked me to read it. Ken wants to know, he's in San Pedro, says, If I've found a temporary job that ends in September, can I still claim unemployment insurance? Ken, can you take that one from Ken, in San Pedro, please?

Ken Gomez: Yes. Hi, good question. If you are working a temporary job at this point and you were laid off in September, meaning there's no more work available, you certainly can file for a claim at that point, based on your circumstances. If you are working a temporary job now and asking if you can claim benefits while working, there are a few parameters that we have to look at. First of all, if you're working full time, which is defined as 40 hours or more, you would not be eligible for those weeks where you did work 40 hours or more.

And then if you did work say a reduced number of hours, for example, we would have to take a look at your earnings for that week or weeks, to determine whether or not we'd be able to compensate you with unemployment benefits for those particular weeks. So, there are some variables here. What I would share with you. I tell people don't try to second guess things. If you're in doubt of anything, whether or not you would be eligible, I would encourage you to file a claim, and then the EDD will review your situation on an individual basis, and let you know whether or not you would be eligible for benefits. Thank you.

Ian: Perfect. Thank you. Appreciate you, Ken. Thanks so much. We've got our next one from Cecilia in Compton, who's asked me to read this question also. Says her sister just got diagnosed positive with COVID and can't go to work because the doctor told her to stay home. Does she qualify for benefits? Thanks for that question from Cecilia. Ken?

Ken Gomez: Yeah. Hi, Cecelia. Sorry to hear about your sister's situation. This might be something that one of our sister agencies, disability insurance would be able to help her with. They have a program. It is available to people that have W2 earnings, and is designed for those people that are too ill or unable to work due to an illness. So, that would be something I would have her pursue. It's part of the employment development department career services, it's called disability insurance. And you can access our website to get more information on that.

So, I would go ahead and encourage her to file a claim. It does require doctor's certification. They do have some workarounds during COVID-19 because we are aware that the safeguards in place at the various clinics and hospitals. So certainly you're welcome to pursue that. They also have walk-in office. Well, they used to up until the COVID-19, but they do have regional offices as well, where you might be able to call for information. I'm aware there's one in Long Beach, I believe it's Long Beach Boulevard, but you can locate that off the website as well. But I would start with a phone call to disability insurances to check out what her options are. Thank you.

Ian: Thank you again, Ken. And for those of you who may have missed the phone numbers that Ken's mentioned earlier in the call, we'll review all of those in a few minutes here, just to make sure you get them all written down. So grab a pen and paper, just to write down anything that you hear today, that'll be useful for you. We'll get our next question coming here live from Seritha in Compton. Seritha, thank you for waiting, you're live on the line. Go ahead and please.

Selitha: Yes. How you doing today?

Ken Gomez: Good.

Selitha: My question is my last day of work was March the 16th, and I kept trying to go online, make the phone call to follow up on an appointment and I didn't get through until April the 24. So I am getting paid, but I want to know, do I get back paid because I was off of work from the March of 16th. I haven't received anything for back payment from March the 16th to April the 24th.

Ken Gomez: Hi Selitha, thanks so much. This is a very good question. We're seeing a lot of these types of questions in our various town halls. Yes. You can request for them to backdate your claim to coincide with the date you were first laid off from work. And if you do have a UI online account, it's very easy to do that. You would just log in, access your home page, use that contact us feature, and then you would submit a question. The category is actually called claim questions. And when you do it, indicate that you had tried to get through to the unemployment department once you were laid off, and you're requesting a back date or a retroactive pay as it's also known, to be effective with your last date of work, which was March 16th, I believe.

And it may take a while for them to process the request because they would have to go back and make adjustments to your payments, but it does not impact your ability to keep collecting benefits moving forward. It might take a while to get those back payments set up, and then they'll ask you to certify for those weeks online by phone or through the mail, whichever you prefer. And of course, fastest way is online for UI online. And then they would bring you up to speed at that point. But that's an excellent question, and it's a very common one. So thanks for asking it.

Ian: Yeah. Thank you so much. Appreciate that answer again, Ken. And we'll get our next one right up from Joyce, also in San Pedro. Hey Joyce, thank you for waiting. You're live on the line. It looks like you want me to read your questions. Happy to do that for you. So, Joyce is wanting to know, I've always worked but I started filing for my social security benefits. I was laid off and applied for unemployment benefits. Will they subtract the SS benefits from the unemployment benefits? That ones from Joyce, Ken.

Ken Gomez: Hi, Joyce. No worries. They will not subtract your social security benefits from your unemployment. That's one type of compensation that we never touch. We never worried about that. It's something that you've earned. You've contributed to the system for many, many years, and that is yours. So, no worries. We would not deduct that from your weekly amount.

Ian: Thank you so much. Appreciate it. Great question. Thank you, Joyce. We've got Tia coming up live next. Hey Tia, thanks for waiting. It looks like you're in Carson. Go ahead with your question. Tia, can you hear me? Is your line on mute maybe? All right. She's got a pretty straightforward question for you Ken, she's asking, is there a second stimulus check going out? And it looks like probably a better question for Congresswoman Barragán to answer.

Nanette Barragá...: Correct. Thank you, Tia for your question. We're getting a lot of people asking if they're going to get a second stimulus payment. That's the payment that went out from the IRS for up to $1,200. The House Democrats have passed legislation on the House side only, to provide a second payment. Again, it's being held up in the Senate. The Senate has not passed it. So, we're continuing to put pressure to have them act because we believe that a $1,200 payment was not sufficient to help cover rent and all the other expenses. So, we'll continue to push for now. I can't tell you when the second payment will go out, we're going to continue to push on that. So, feel free to call our office for updates or sign up for our newsletter, but we will make sure to announce when that second payment will go out. We've got to get the Senate to act first. Thanks Ian.

Ian: Thank you. Appreciate the answer, Congresswoman. Thanks for the question Tia. We've got our next one coming live from Carlos in South Gate. Hey Carlos, you're on. Go ahead please.

Carlos: Okay. Hi, Ken. My name is Carlos. How are you?

Ken Gomez: Good. Thank you, Carlos. Good evening.

Carlos: Yeah. Ken I go over very briefly. I have active benefits, because I was quitted my job back in October, and I started working as an independent contractor, as a real estate person, and of course I was affected by the pandemic. So, you guys system now led me to do a new claim. So, I have to reopen a claim as an independent contractor. So, I submitted the claim. The first one was back on May 1st in a way, three weeks nothing's happened. I submit a second claim because I thought about it that your system it was not let through my first claim, but until today's date, I haven't heard anything from your department. And I'm been calling, sending emails, not a letter, nothing, not answered at all if my claims qualified for PUA benefits or is not qualified, or standing are not eligible or what was going on? So what I can do?

Ken Gomez: Okay, Carlos. First of all, while the PUA claims might take a little bit longer than a regular claim to file, you've waited quite a bit of time. So, this is another situation where we'd really want to do a little quick investigation to see what's blocking your claim from moving forward. I know that you mentioned previously, that I believe you had a regular claim a while back, and that we would look at that as well to see if that's something we could restart for you and get you collecting benefits on that claim. That's an option. But again, this would be a situation when you would want to speak to one of the staff members at the congresswoman's office to see if we can elevate that for you, because it really does require some investigation. It should not take more than about four to five weeks maximum, even for a PUA claim, and we're now looking at about a two month period. So if you could follow up, that would be wonderful.

Ian: Thank you so much. And could I have the Congresswoman read your district office number again here for anybody who might've missed it.

Nanette Barragá...: Absolutely. Carlos, please call my office. It's (310) 831-1799. And we will make sure to follow up for you on your individual claim.

Ian: Thank you again, Congresswoman. Thank you, Ken. And thank you Carlos, for your question. We'll get our next one up. This one's from Frank who's asked me to read it. He says his benefits ran out August 31st, his benefits say, I have $1,400 left and it doesn't run out until the end of year. Which of those is true? I think we'll turn that one over to Ken to answer. Did you get that question?

Ken Gomez: Yeah. It sounds like there was a previous claim involved, and it's still valid because it's less than a year old. And there is a balance left. Generally, what we would do is try to restart, reactivate or we call it reopen a claim, and then run that through, and then go onto an extension, and then our last resort would be the PUA claim that there aren't other options available. What I would recommend is Frank, if you have a UI online account, if you could look at your homepage, there's a section that's called notifications. It's at the very top. If there's a button that says reopen claim, you can select that button and then reopen it online.

If there isn't a button, I would recommend sending us a message through your UI online account so that we can take a look to see what your best options would be. But yeah, it sounds like you have some money left in your balance. Also since it was filed pre-pandemic, we know that it's a regular claim. So, there's also that eligibility for an extension. So, we have some things to look at, but we need to get more of a timeline as far as when you were last out of work, and all those other particulars. So, if you could check first with UI online, that would be a good first start. And then after that, we would want to go ahead and see about assisting you with any other options that might be available.

Nanette Barragá...: And Ken, if I could help clarify for our caller. The benefit that I'm talking about is the extra $600 a week from the federal government. That is the one that's going to end, at the end of July, right? So the person can still get their state unemployment, but they will no longer get, is that right? They'll no longer get the federal benefit of $600 a week after July 31st?

Ken Gomez: Yes, that is correct. I'm sorry. I misunderstood the question. Thanks for clarifying that.

Nanette Barragá...: Okay. So, after July 31st the federal benefit of $600 a week will no longer be added to whatever the state benefit is. But after that time, unless Congress passes a new bill or passes the existing bill we already passed out of the House. Unless there's new legislation, or let me just say a new law, then people will still collect unemployment from the state, and whatever the state benefit is, the extra benefit of the $600 from the federal government, that's what will end on July 31st, if both houses and the president doesn't sign a law extending that time. So, just wanted to make sure we're all clear on that. Anything in there, Ken, that I said that was inaccurate.

Ken Gomez: No, that's definitely right on target. Thank you for clarifying that.

Nanette Barragá...: Okay.

Ken Gomez: I was thinking that he had a claim previously.

Nanette Barragá...: Okay. Thanks, Frank. I hope that answered his question. We're ready Ian for the next question.

Ian: Thank you again. We'll get our next question up from our Spanish simulcasts. Quick reminder though, if you want to give us your email address to get email updates from the Congresswoman, please press seven on your phone, and we'll keep you updated on this issue and other issues that affect you in California's 44th congressional district. Again, please press seven, to give us your email address, to get email updates from the Congressman's office. Our next question comes from our Spanish simulcast, it's from Miguel, who's asking. I started working a bit, but then my wife got COVID and my employer told me not to come back until I can prove that I'm okay and do not have it. Can I apply for unemployment benefits again, because of the situation I'm in? That question comes from Miguel, if you wouldn't mind Ken.

Ken Gomez: Yes. Hi Miguel. Yes. You absolutely can apply for unemployment benefit because of the requirement for you to remain... You're in good health, fortunately, but you are required to remain at home as to contain any sort of spread of the virus. So yes, you would want to apply for unemployment benefits. Just make sure that when you do apply that you state the reason is due to COVID-19. Thank you.

Ian: Got it. Thank you. Thanks Miguel, appreciate your question. We've got our next one coming live from Nellie in South Gate in. Hey Nellie, thank you so much for waiting. What's your question for us?

Nellie: Hi, good afternoon. I filled a claim, I believe it was March 20th, which was the last day I worked due to COVID and currently, actually a few days ago I received four letters from EDD, stating that I did get weeks paid, but up to this day, I never received my cards through the mail. I created an account, I did everything, but to this date I haven't received the card through the mail. I'm not so sure what I could do.

Ken Gomez: Hi, Nellie, it's Ken. I'm sorry to hear that. First of all, I'm glad to hear that you're being paid, but what concerns me is the fact that you didn't receive your EDD debit card yet. That is something that is normally sent when your first payment is authorized within about five business days or so. And it comes directly from Bank of America. It sounds like we may want to do a little bit of investigation/intervention here to see what's holding that up. So, if I could kindly ask you to contact the Congresswoman Barragán's local office and speak to their staff, and provide them with some information. We can take a look at it for you because this seems a little tricky because it involves not just the EDD, but also our vendor, Bank of America. And I would also encourage you Nellie, please, to continue to certify for your benefits while this is going on, because that way we can keep paying you so that when you do get your card, you're going to have a lovely, nice high balance.

Another option that you might consider, and this is reaching out to Bank of America's EDD debit card customer service center. It's a 24 hour operation. They might be able to assist you by phone, but in many cases, they refer you back to the EDD if there's any issue with the issuance of the card. Unfortunately, I don't have that number handy, but I can try to get it before the end of this simulcast, and have it communicated at that point. But that is a special number staffed by Bank of America, customer service representative. But again, it sounds like we need to do some investigation here because there's seems to be a disconnect, because we're paying, we're pushing money to the card, but unfortunately you're not receiving it. We want to make sure that you get the benefits that are due to you. Thank you.

Ian: All right. Thank you very much, Ken. And Nellie, in case you didn't have the Congresswoman's district office phone number, that phone number again is (310) 831-1799. That's (310) 831-1799. Thank you so much. Let's get our next one up here from Tracy. Tracy in Compton, thanks so much for waiting. What's your question?

Tracy: Hi, my question is, our first claim week was May 10th through May 16th. And I wasn't sure how to fill out my claim form and I couldn't get in touch with anyone. I had vacation pay, and floating holiday pay that was given to me the prior week. But I put it on that first week's claim form because I didn't want to take any chances on not reporting it if I was supposed to. And then, for the first week I didn't get paid. They said I had excessive pay. So, I was wondering if I was supposed to put that vacation pay and floating holiday pay that I received at the end of April, if I was supposed to put it on that May 10th through May 16th claim week.

Ken Gomez: Okay, Tracy, thank you first of all, for reporting your wages. This one can have a few variables depending on whether you were laid off indefinitely, which means they did not give you a set date to come back to work. If they did not, anything that you earned prior to that would not be deductible because you are on, what they call an indefinite layoff. But if they gave you a firm date to return, we'd have to look at it individually, and make a determination as to what parts of those monies you reported would be deductible, if any. So, it sounds to me like more than likely, we would need to make an adjustment payment for the week where you didn't have any income or wages or holiday pay of that nature. If you use UI online, what you could do is just log into your account. Again, the contact us link, there's a payments category, and just let them know that you may have made an error when reporting your wages, and then briefly explain your situation.

Please be clear with them as far as whether or not you were laid off indefinitely, or just temporarily with a firm date to come back to work, because that will make a difference as to whether or not it would be deductible. And it would also be good if you look on your notification section of your homepage, because there could be other certifications waiting for you in there, so that you can submit those as well. We want to keep your claim as current as possible. So, even if they say you're not getting paid for one week, it's only temporary. That's because of what they call excessive earnings. And that doesn't mean you're not eligible for the remainder of the time. So, please continue to certify. If you don't have access to your UI online account, I would say the next best option is EDD Tele-Cert, and I'll repeat that number for you, that's the one that's (866) 333-4606, and that's available 24/7.

Again, you have to create a four digit pin your first time in, in addition to certifying for your benefits by phone, you can also find out when your last payment was made. So, it'd would be worth setting up if you needed that service, if you're not able to access UI online at this time. Thank you.

Ian: Thanks again. And thank you, Tracy. Appreciate your question. We'll get our next one up here live from Davis. Davis, you're live. Go ahead with your question, please.

Davis: Yes. So I had a couple of questions. The first one pertains to, I know with COVID the requirements for being able to claim unemployment benefits have been relaxed, and there's a lot less red tape around that. Currently, I'm still employed. I'm being paid most likely because of the PPP loan that my business got, the company that I worked for got. I'm starting to think that once that money is all used up, they will probably be laying me off. Would I still be eligible to claim COVID-19 at that point in a month or two, to get unemployment? And then the second question I had, was I actually work a side job, or a secondary job as a consultant, independent contractor, and that was a substantial more than 20% of my income, and that business has completely just stopped because of this. So, would that also be a reason why I can get unemployment benefits?

Ken Gomez: Yes, Davis. I would absolutely encourage you to file. There's a few things you might want to just take into consideration first. If you are receiving $600 or more per week, more than likely you could still be eligible for a claim, but you would not be eligible for benefits for that particular week or weeks. If you're making less than that, you can apply obviously for partial benefits by reporting your wages, as provided by the payroll protection plan. And then you could take a look at that, see if that would be able to net you any money at that point. And yes, your original situation was triggered by COVID-19. So, that would be the reason you'd want to indicate when you do file for unemployment. And what we would look at since, fortunately, in your case, all of your work seems to be independent contractor work. Is that correct?

Davis: Not all. 20% of my work is that, and then I'm W2 for the other.

Ken Gomez: Oh, okay. Yeah. Thanks for clarifying that Davis, because what we would do, first of all, we have to make an attempt to see if you had enough W2 wages to file a regular claim. And then if you didn't, then we would fall back on the pandemic unemployment assistance program, the PUA, to qualify you that way. But the department of labor requires that regardless of what the amount turns out to be, a regular claim always takes precedence over a pandemic claim. There are some benefits to that such as it would be valid for 26 weeks, with the one year validity. It doesn't expire at the end of the year, like the PUA does. It has extension possibilities. So, if you are in a situation where your hours are reduced, and, or laid off, then I would highly encourage you to apply for a claim.

Ian: Got it. Thank you again, Ken-

Ken Gomez: And make sure that when you do file, to make sure that you do indicate it as the result of COVID-19. That's really important to us. It allows us to waive the waiting period, and to apply any other special provisions that we might have.

Ian: And Ken, you've mentioned a couple of important phone numbers here. Would you mind reading those off again to make sure that everybody has them, and explaining why they might call those numbers real quick before we get our next question up?

Ken Gomez: Yeah, sure. No problem. If you need to speak to a representative, the number that you would call would be (800) 300-5616. That's Monday through Friday, from 8:00 AM to 12 noon. And at that number, they can answer specific questions about your claim. They can file a claim by phone if necessary. They are a full service number. There is a number available for those that speak Spanish. It's (800) 326-8937. And we do have dedicated lines in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. But unfortunately I didn't write those numbers down, but they are on the website.

The next number I'd like to offer up is our UI online assistance center, which has now been renamed the UI claims support center. That is the number that's available every day of the week from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, except for state holidays. And by the way, July 3rd is not a state holiday. So, it will be open on the third. And we don't take Monday off, the sixth, either. That number would be (833) 978-2511. And then the self service phone line, which is how you would certify for benefits by phone, or just check to see when your last payment was made is 24/7 at (866) 333-4606. And that has a language option, you can select English or Spanish. Thank you.

Ian: Thank you again, Ken. Much appreciated. And thanks to everybody who's continued to join us. We're going to be taking a few more questions. We've got about 10 minutes left. We'll go as long as we can here, and take as many questions as we can. We'll get our next one up here from Flora. Hi flora, thank you for waiting. What's your question?

Flora: Hi. How are you? Okay. I filed my claim on the 23rd of March. I had an identity theft issue, I've resolved it. I had it go through. They sent me my EBT card. I got paid for four payments on my first two payments. They didn't include the $600 CARES Act. And now I have filed the claim form, and I've been waiting for it since June 9th, for those pending claims to go through. I'm trying to figure out what's going on. What's taking forever for them to pay me because I've been waiting for over three months for my payments.

Ken Gomez: Okay. Let me go ahead and address the $600 stimulus payment. We need to make that right for you, first of all. So, we will certainly need to make a correction there. One thing I will just state though that the $600 stimulus payment did not go into effect until the end of March. So, if you had any weeks before that, that ended before the end of March, that shall we say ended on or before April 3rd, then the stimulus payment would not apply to those weeks. But if the weeks fell April 4th or a later, we would have to make that adjustment. And we can do that a fairly simple process. Now, the other thing that's concerning to me is if you filed your most recent certifications on the 9th, we're getting close toward the end of the month, right now. They shouldn't be pending for that period of time. Generally when they're pending, it's because we have to manually enter something like wage information, or we have to look at maybe one of the clarifying questions that you answered to make sure that we can either clear the claim, or schedule an interview to talk more about it.

So what I would suggest, because I don't have access to the claim record, would be to, if you have a UI online line account, again, send that message letting them know that you need to get your retroactive stimulus payment. And at the same time, you want to find out why the payments are pending. So, if that doesn't work and if you don't hear a response back within say three to five business days, then I would definitely contact Congresswoman Barragán's office, to see if they can assist you. And then we can partner with them to find out what's holding that claim up because we know that the identity issue has been resolved, and we thank you for providing all the documents on that. But there shouldn't be any issues after that's taken place. So, I'm just a little perplexed as to why it's not moving forward. So, if you want to start with the UI online contact us procedure, that would be wonderful. If you don't hear something back in a short period of time, and I think we really need to investigate your situation to see what's holding up your claim. Thank you.

Ian: Thanks again, Ken. Thank you Flora. We have the Deshaun next, and he's asked me to read his question, happy to do that. It says my son is a college student out of state, and worked there and attempted to apply for benefits in that state. Can he apply in California since he is a resident, and has been displaced. I am disabled from a car accident and my benefits and disability will run out, and I was furloughed from my job. Would I still be able to apply for pandemic benefits or a basic claim? Let's see, Ken, you want to take that one on?

Ken Gomez: Yeah. So I wanted-

Ian: And let me know if you need me to read any part of it again.

Ken Gomez: Yeah. I might need the second part repeated. I'm sorry. I was trying to write it down, it's not appearing on the screen here.

Ian: No problem.

Ken Gomez: So, the first question, if someone works out of state, they would really need to file a claim with that particular state. The only exceptions would be is if you worked in California and another state, then you'd have some options. You can either do what they call an interstate claim, where you file with both States. You collect from both States, but not at the same time. And they do have different benefit amounts. I would caution you with that. The other one that most people prefer to do is just a basic combined wage claim, where we look at all the income earned on W2 forms throughout the US, combine it all together, and have one state administer it such as California. But if someone's solely worked in another state, you would need to file with that particular state regardless of your residency. And Ian, if you'd be so kind as to read the second part of the question.

Ian: Sure thing. So, he says, can he apply in California since he is a resident and has been displaced. I'm disabled from a car accident, and my benefits from disability will run out, and I was furloughed from my job. Would I still be able to apply for pandemic benefits or basic claims?

Ken Gomez: Generally speaking, in order to be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits of any sort, you have to be physically able and available to work. If you're not, then we would segue into our disability insurance program at this point. The other option is if you are on disability insurance already, and it's going to go beyond the one year validity, you might want to consider filing with the federal government for social security, disability insurance. That would be another option. But unfortunately, in order to qualify to receive benefits from unemployment insurance, you would have to be released back from your doctor into the workforce.

We're not saying that you have to do the same type of job, if the doctor releases you saying that, "Oh, you can't do heavy lifting, but you can do office work." Then we would consider you as being able and available, because you're able to do some type of work. So if in doubt, as I mentioned before, file a claim. And the nice thing about EDD is we do address everyone as an individual, and we look at your individual circumstances. So, that would be something you might want to explore. But I don't want to get your hopes up if your doctor hasn't released you back to work of any sort. But if there's that possibility and that day comes, I would encourage you to file a claim, and we can take a look to see if you would be eligible or not. Thank you.

Ian: All right. Thank you, again Ken. We've got Gabriella in Lynnwood, who's asked me to read this question. So, she's a substitute teacher, she's getting paid, but also collecting unemployment. Can she collect unemployment and get paid by the school? That one's from Gabriella, Ken.

Ken Gomez: Hi Gabriella, that's a good question. I have a lot of friends that are school teachers as well, and I feel for them. I know the hours have been greatly reduced. What we can do, is whenever you are collecting unemployment, you are required to report all of your gross earnings in the week, which they're earned, not when they're paid. And then we take a look to see what you've earned versus what we would pay you in unemployment. And then, if we can pay you at least $1 in regular benefits, we would then be able to add that stimulus payment. So, that's something that you would want to be aware of. As a rule of thumb, most people use as a guideline, is if your hours are reduced 20%, or your wages or hours are reduced by 20% or more. That's usually a cue for you to apply. And then we can take a look at it.

One thing I would just clarify with how we assess wages earned. They first of all, are gross wages. That means your wages before any reductions or deductions. The first $25 or 25% of what you earn is not deductible, but over that, it's taken away dollar for dollar. So, for example, if you made a hundred dollars teaching maybe one class, the first $25 wouldn't count. So, we would subtract $75 from your weekly benefit amount. If you're at the top of scale, for example, at the 450 mark, again, the first 25% would not be deductible, but the remainder would, and that would mean we would subtract 375 from your 450. So, I know hours can fluctuate, especially when you're teaching, and sometimes it's feast or famine. So, if in doubt file your claim, report your earnings, and the EDD will determine if you're eligible for benefits for that week. Thank you.

Ian: Thank you, Ken. And thanks for that question from Gabriella. We'll get our next one up here from Ruby in Compton, live. Ruby, thanks for waiting. What's your question for us? Ruby, if you're still there, you're on the line here. All right. I'll go ahead and read Ruby's question for her as well. She says she's currently unemployed, but can't afford internet at home that she needs for work. Was told to come into work, to file for unemployment. Can you clarify how she could file for unemployment. Ken, that ones from Ruby.

Ken Gomez: Yeah. Hi Ruby. Thanks for that question. I know that we even had staff that weren't able to telework because they didn't have the proper type of internet at their home. So, we had to make some provisions for that. But if the employer is requiring you to telework and you're unable to do so, I would obviously encourage you to file a claim. Since you have no internet, one option would be to call us at our regular number, Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 12 noon. The other option would be to go online, I mean you can't go online, but if maybe a friend or family member can go online for you, they can print the paper application, and you can fill it out and either fax or mail it to the address. We have a fax number listed on the form. So that would be an option there for you as well.

Another thing that we could recommend is that you might go to a public library, if they're accepting walk in traffic. They do have computers available free of charge. Some of our workforce services offices known as America's Job Centers of California might be able to provide you with the applications, or assist you in some way. So, those are some options that you would have available to you. But I would definitely tell you to go ahead and file, and then we would review your individual circumstances to determine whether or not you'd be eligible for benefits. But you would need to let us know that it was a requirement for work that you had to work at home, and to do so you, you had to have internet access.

So please file at your earliest convenience. And if you want to try calling, I would say Mondays and Fridays are our busiest days. So, tomorrow is Thursday, you might get through. But I would start at 8:00 o'clock in the morning, and just keep trying to dial that number, if you can get through to see if someone can assist you with filing that claim by phone. Thanks.

Ian: And that phone number one more time for us, Ken, before we wrap up here.

Ken Gomez: Yeah. That number is, one moment please. (800) 300-5616.

Ian: Perfect. Thank you so much again. And thank you for that last question from Ruby. Unfortunately, we've run out of time. We went a few minutes over the hour to take a couple extra questions here. If we didn't take your question, or we didn't get your question answered, please stay on the line here and you'll have an opportunity to leave a voicemail message by staying on the line. If you need somebody from Congresswoman Barragan's office to call you back, and follow up with any of the questions that we were unable to answer during our forum here.

So, if Ken was unable to answer your question or we didn't get something covered during our forum here, we apologize for those of you who submitted questions we didn't have time to take. But you can stay on the line here, leave a voicemail message, and we'll be sure to get back to you so long as you leave your name, your question or concern and your phone number so that we can give you a call back. Again, all you have to do is stay on the line until we wrap up the call in a couple of minutes here, and you'll be able to leave those messages. And with that, I'll turn it back over to your Congresswoman Nanette Barragán to take us to the close. Go ahead, please.

Nanette Barragá...: All right, well thank you, Ian, and thank you, Ken so, so much for all your help, for spending your hour with us, well over an hour, and answering constituent calls. If your question did not get answered today and you need help from our office, please call our district office. One more time, (310) 831-1799. And if you have not yet, please fill out the census. The census is so critically important. It determines funding for our district, and for lots of programs, school lunches, you name it. So, please fill out the census. Thank you all again. I hope you have a good night, stay safe and stay healthy. Everybody, please wear a mask when you go out. Take care.