

TWU Local 556 Unemployment Issues Timeline



Early June 2020

We began to receive emails from Members reporting issues with unemployment insurance claim denials. Our Members were reporting state agencies were rejecting them with reasons including "quit their job" or "claimant was active and work was available". Although TWU Local 556 could not intercede with the respective state unemployment insurance offices, we immediately tracked and assistant Members to our capability. We began to research and build a case to prove management underhandedness.

Late June 2020

TWU Local 556 President Lyn Montgomery and 1st Vice President Chad Kleibscheidel began communication with Labor Relations and Southwest Airlines Legal Counsel regarding what we believed to be erroneous reporting. We received confirmation that errors were made leading to the denial of a Flight Attendants benefits. This allegedly was due to Equifax, the outsourced third-party company processing the claims. Chad reached out to SWA Legal counsel with the following:

"Thank you for relaying this information. I am confident you'd agree the errors generated by Equifax are inexcusable. People's livelihoods are dependent on correct and precise reporting involving these life-changing circumstances. Currently, I am compiling a list of known Flight Attendants who may be affected and are pursuing guidance and immediate employer assistance. Who would be the best contact to follow up with regarding this matter? Unfortunately, the credibility of the Company and its ETO program is being questioned as a result of Equifax's negligence, and I am fearful this may be more than a handful of "isolated incidents." After discovering the inaccuracies with Equifax's reporting, I ask, what is the Company's plan to formally notify the Flight Attendant group of the inaccuracies produced by Equifax, and what steps should be taken if they have been denied erroneously? Southwest Airlines Management must be open about the situation and immediately offer increased direction and education to our Flight Attendants."

The Union was finally granted an email address to give if someone reached out. It took Flight Attendants up to two weeks to receive a response from Southwest Airlines. The support obtained from the Company was nominal at best. We learned the department administering the unemployment and the newly created leave programs consisted of two individuals. Two.

Management continued claiming Equifax was chiefly culpable for the confusion and they were working with Equifax to "perform corrections" stating: "our vendor has recently updated every state in writing advising each state that Southwest does not question the eligibility of employees on ETO. However, each state determines eligibility for unemployment not Southwest Airlines, and ETO is a voluntary program." At this point, multiple demands have been made to acquire the names of those who were spearheading the unemployment issues at headquarters. No reply. As we stood by, Member complaints were still being documented.

July 2020

We continued to receive Member emails with unemployment insurance denials due to reporting inaccuracies. After contacting Southwest Airlines, a generic email was provided again and a point of contact was not provided. Southwest Airlines provided no further information on the unemployment department or who was charged with its oversight. It was only after sending the following email* to random departments and managers companywide we were finally supplied with a specific point of contact..

August 2020- Current

After a telephone conference reiterating the issues and problems our flight attendants were enduring, and petitioning for mediation between the company and state agencies, we were informed a new collection of documents would be released. We once again made it clear our Members were being denied unemployment insurance owing to reporting inaccuracies and lack of support from the company. We stressed a document of unemployment allowance eligibility should be crafted and provided to our Flight Attendants. We proposed that all unemployment documents, FAQs, and a letter of assistance to be used during the appeals process (if required) be housed and easily accessible to download via SWALife. To resolve all issues, a meeting was organized, but subsequently cancelled by management. TWU Local 556 did not reschedule a future meeting basing our decision on months of repeated attempts to receive information and management's resistance to help the Flight Attendants that helped them. However, our investigation and research progress. TWU Local 556 has been actively fighting for our Members during this extremely stressful time.

