

As a former member of the Employment Department's Advisory Council and a person with over 35 years of experience in the unemployment insurance world, I believe very strongly that some tweaks to the Oregon employment department rules could insure the least harm possible comes to our workers in this economic crisis. Our trust fund is in very good shape and can withstand a significant expenditure to keep our economy from falling off a cliff.

The first thing that could be done would be to waive the waiting week requirement for anyone who is unemployed due to loss of business from the coronavirus. Each individual could be confirmed as being unemployed due to the virus by a simple statement from his or her employer that lack of work has resulted from the impact of the crisis. No further investigation would be necessary and benefits should be able to begin immediately.

Additionally, since there are many gig workers and other individuals who are self-employed who will be significantly impacted by the requirement of social distancing, some action should be taken to reach beyond the normal coverage of unemployment insurance. As there would not have been coverage provided by taxes paid by employers, funding for this would probably have to come from the state's rainy day funds.

The good news is the employment department is well situated to accept and manage this challenge.

As the unemployment system basically saved our bacon in the 2008 financial crisis, so can it again now. It will need to be supplemented by amounts from the general fund, but if we simply turn to this existing program and expand it, which can be done readily with emergency rules, we should be able to shield ourselves from the worst of the results that could come from this economic crisis.

If I can be of any additional help in any way, feel free to contact me.

Robin Quon