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Record jobless claims new normal in coronavirus shutdown

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) today reported its third straight week of near record jobless claims with 226,007 initial filings. That's less than the 272,117 for the week ending March 28, but exceeds every other week on record. By comparison, 7,042 initial claims were made for the week ending March 7. Filings for the past three weeks totaled 696,519 - far exceeding the 364,603 claims for all of 2019. Policy Matters Ohio Researcher Michael Shields releases the following statement:

“What’s so unique about this moment is that to stop the spread of COVID-19 and save lives, Governor DeWine has ordered as many workers as possible to stay home. This necessary pause is painful, but it doesn’t have to wipe out workers and Main Street. State and federal policymakers did too little in the last recession to boost the economy with spending targeted to working people and families and wasted too much of the recovery on tax cuts for the wealthiest and bailouts for corporations. This time they can avoid the same mistakes, and instead enact robust measures that will help all of us rebound once the health crisis passes.

“Congress has extended and expanded unemployment compensation in ways that will benefit large numbers of jobless Ohioans who urgently need it. Many aren’t yet able to access those benefits. The DeWine administration needs to broadly interpret both the law passed by the General Assembly and the new federal CARES Act so unemployed Ohioans can receive a maximum amount of assistance. Other states, including our neighbor Kentucky, will be issuing the \$600 pandemic unemployment compensation supplement today. When can Ohioans expect their help to arrive?

“Nationally, [fewer than 30% of working people can work from home: the share is even smaller for workers of color, according to the Economic Policy Institute](#). State policymakers must respond in a targeted way, or we will have another recovery that deepens inequality, instead of building shared prosperity. [The frontline workers who can't](#) stay home have always been essential and deserve protection and dignity. For all whose work can be deferred, unemployment benefits need to be maximized so as many Ohioans as possible can adhere to Gov. DeWine’s stay-at-home order and halt the spread of the pandemic.

“The coronavirus recession may have been unavoidable, but how long and how bad it gets is up to us. We need to avoid the mistakes of the last recession. This time, policymakers must direct resources to working people and families; federal funds must support state and local governments to prevent cuts that would exacerbate the downturn; and Congress should set economic triggers to keep stimulus money flowing as long as it’s needed.”