

GILL RAGON OWEN

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ARKANSAS UNEMPLOYMENT UPDATE

Gill Ragon Owen stands ready to assist you through these trying times.

The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (“PUA”) program enacted in the CARES Act provides unemployment benefits for self-employed individuals and independent contractors who are not ordinarily eligible. Arkansas’s current unemployment claims system is not able to process these types of claims, and the Division of Workforce Services is working to launch a separate system. On Friday, May 1, 2020, the State announced that the system would undergo testing over the weekend, and could launch as early as Monday, May 4. As of 11:00 a.m. Monday, the application is not live yet. The application will be available [here](#).

Commerce Secretary Mike Preston has stated that he anticipates more than 125,000 initial claims, which could cause an initial delay of processing claims. Persons making claims under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program can backdate their claims to as early as March 18.

PUA payments will primarily benefit physicians, dentists, hair stylists, and other self-employed individuals who do not ordinarily qualify for unemployment. The state has started lifting various restrictions, including on elective procedures, barber shops and hair salons, restaurants, gyms, and dental clinics. Secretary Preston confirmed that even if these individuals return to work before the system is launched, **they can still submit backdated applications to recoup benefits owed** back to the date that eligibility began.

The State has launched a website for updates on the PUA system, available at https://arkansasdws.formstack.com/forms/pua_information. Individuals may also sign up to be notified via email when the system goes live.

For more information on this program, and other COVID-19 related topics, please review our COVID-19 Resources page here: <https://www.gill-law.com/covid-19-resources/#>