

# ***NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS***

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## **COMPLAINTS ABOUT NEW WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS COMPUTER SYSTEM TO BE HEARD BY STATE SENATORS ON FRIDAY**

People will get a chance on Friday to talk to legislators about the problems they've encountered with the newly implemented computer system at the Workforce Solutions Department during a hearing before the Senate Public Affairs Committee.

Also scheduled to appear at the committee hearing, which will take place in the main Senate Chamber, is the labor department's cabinet secretary, Celina Bussey, who will be at the Capitol with members of her staff to listen to the public comments and explain what measures they have taken and will take to improve services.

Earlier this year the department went online with a new \$45 million computer system that was purchased with federal money. From the start, people calling into the new computer system with unemployment claims had problems getting through. Bussey's administration at one time acknowledged that the helpline was flooded with 180,000 calls from 17,000 people in only a few days.

There were many media accounts of people calling in and being put on hold for hours and hours before they finally had to hang up in frustration. Bussey and Governor Susana Martinez have repeatedly announced publicly to those calling in to just keep trying despite the wait time, with no positive assurance that their calls would be answered in a timely fashion.

Many business people have also experienced problems with the system as well and the department took measures to waive fees for people paying their quarterly taxes late because they couldn't get into the system.

Brett Newberry, president of Newberry and Associates LTE in Gallup, said last month that the state system erroneously sent his company the social security number and last name of an individual who never worked there. Newberry, who is also a CPA, says the new \$45 million system also has database issues; it is using maiden names for workers who've been married for up to 10 years.

“It is important that we, as lawmakers, hear personally from the people who are being affected by these problems at Workforce Solutions,” said Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino (Bernalillo, District 12), the chairman of the Senate Public Affairs Committee. “It is also important that these same people hear directly from the powers that be at the department so that they can hear firsthand that things will improve.

“Most of these are hard working people who are being put in dire straits financially until they can get back on their feet.”

The Senate Public Affairs Committee will meet on Friday about 30 minutes after the Senate floor session ends and the Chamber is cleared. The Senate floor session is scheduled to start at 10:30 a.m. Friday.