



October 15, 2020

Election Judge Compensation and Unemployment Insurance

Serving as an election judge does not make an individual ineligible to receive unemployment insurance. However, the compensation paid to an election judge is remuneration for personal services and is therefore considered wages. An individual who is receiving unemployment benefits and who is employed as an election judge is required to report gross election judge wages on their certification, and their benefits will be adjusted accordingly.

Election judges are tasked with administering and enforcing strict voting procedures in their precincts. The day before an election, they might set up the equipment and make signs. Typical duties on election day include opening and closing the polls, greeting voters, verifying voter identification and polling location, registering new voters, and handing out ballots or activation cards for touchscreen voting machines. Election judges are compensated for their work. In Cook County, for example, an election judge may earn up to \$200 for the day.

Section 234 of the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Act defines “wages” as: “...every form of remuneration for personal services, including salaries, commissions, bonuses, and the reasonable money value of all remuneration in any medium other than cash...” (820 ILCS 405/234). This statutory definition encompasses compensation for election judge duties.

Administrative Rule 2960.66 also addresses the compensation of election judges. This rule provides that: “The compensation paid to an election judge by a Board of Elections constitutes remuneration for personal services and, therefore, must be deducted from unemployment insurance benefits as provided in Section 402 of the Act, and service as an election judge also constitutes bona fide work for the purpose of Section 607 of the Act.” (56 Il. Adm. Code 2960.66).

Claimants receiving regular unemployment benefits are required to certify every two weeks and report if they worked, along with any **gross** wages earned in that two-week period, including compensation for election judge duties. If the gross wages earned within that period are 50% or more of their weekly benefit amount (WBA), deductions will be made to account for wages earned. If earnings equal or exceed the WBA for either week, the claimant would be ineligible for benefits for the weeks in which those earnings equal or exceed the WBA. (820 ILCS 405/402).

Claimants receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits are required to certify every week and report if they worked, along with any **gross** wages earned as an employee in that one-week period, including compensation for election judge duties. Net wages are reported when earned in self-employment. If the wages earned within that period are 50% or more of their weekly benefit amount (WBA), deductions will be made to account for wages earned. If earnings equal or exceed the WBA for either week, the claimant would be ineligible for benefits for the weeks in which those earnings equal or exceed the WBA. (820 ILCS 405/402).

###