



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Virginia Employment Commission

Demetrios J. Melis
Commissioner

Post Office Box 26441
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October 1, 2025

TO: The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia, 23218

The Honorable R. Creigh Deeds
Chair, Senate Commerce and Labor
Senate of Virginia
P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23218

The Honorable Jeion A. Ward
Chair, House Labor and Commerce
Virginia House of Delegates
P.O. Box 7310
Hampton, Virginia 23666

The Honorable Adam Ebbin
Chair, Commission on Unemployment Compensation
Senate of Virginia
P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23218

FROM: Demetrios J. Melis, Commissioner

RE: Update on the Office of the Unemployment Compensation Ombudsman – 4th Quarter,
FY 2025

Dear Governor, Chairmen, and Madam Chair:

Per the Appropriation Act – Chapter 725, Item 356 I. (Regular Session, 2025) of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) is required to provide a quarterly report to update the General Assembly on the Unemployment Compensation Ombudsman, to the Governor, House Labor and Commerce Committee, the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, and the Commission on Unemployment Compensation. This letter serves to meet that requirement.

Specialized Escalation Team:

The Ombudsman duties are carried out by VEC's Chief Customer Advocate. In the fourth quarter of FY 2025 the Chief Customer Advocate continued to serve Virginians in need of unemployment assistance. The Chief Customer Advocate is supported by a Specialized Escalation Team that includes up to 12-15 employees, overseen by two supervisors. The goal of the Escalation Team has been to provide specialized assistance, within 48 hours, to customers facing challenges navigating the VEC systems, as well as cases forwarded to them by other VEC units and legislative offices.

In the fourth quarter of FY 2025, the Escalation Team received 7,877 cases and closed 7,855 cases. On average, the Escalation Team was successful in contacting customers within 54.8 hours and closing cases within 4.9 days. Over 77% of those customers contacted VEC through the customer contact form on the new VEC website, highlighting VEC's progress in expanding direct lines of communication with those whom we serve. This online form and collaboration with the Escalation Team have helped reduce the waiting times for those who need to contact VEC by phone.

Additionally, the Chief Customer Advocate continues to pay close attention to the case escalation trends. Challenges in filing the initial or weekly claims as well as payment issues formed half of the cases that needed to be escalated. Challenges with online services (21%) were also another noticeable trend in the fourth quarter of FY 202. While each escalation case can be unique, some customers lacked familiarity with online processes while others faced difficulties with identity verification mechanisms in place to prevent fraud. Continued data analysis over time remains essential to helping the Chief Customer Advocate identify any operational inefficiencies and propose potential solutions.

Outreach Efforts:

Due to the impact of the federal workforce changes on some Virginians, multiple VEC offices mobilized to support the Chief Customer Advocate's outreach efforts, particularly in Northern Virginia. The VEC's Policy and Legislative Affairs Director participated in webinars for former federal workers to educate them on how to apply for Unemployment Insurance benefits. One webinar was specifically for former USAID employees returning from overseas. The Chief Customer Advocate also personally traveled to Alexandria and Woodbridge to attend events organized by local representatives for those impacted by the federal workforce transition. Additionally, the Director of Communications participated in a Community Resource Fair in Henrico County to share updates on UI eligibility, online filing and VEC's new upgraded website, which received praise from one of the state delegates in attendance.

Stakeholder Engagements:

The Chief Customer Advocate has responded to over 250 emails from employers across Virginia who asked for assistance to navigate the VEC systems and their obligations as employers. The

Chief Customer Advocate also coordinates closely with Virginia Works, having already participated in several inter-agency interactions this quarter.

Additionally, to improve VEC's overall customer service, the Chief Customer Advocate is evaluating how claimants and employers request assistance from the VEC. Because customers currently use multiple channels—sometimes causing delays or duplicate responses—VEC is forming two teams to enhance how we respond and share information. VEC will survey employers, claimants and staff to further quantify issues that are known and discover unknown issues, with the hopes of providing recommendations to VEC's leadership. The first survey is expected in October.

The VEC continues to see momentum in our service improvements, education and outreach efforts, and foster positive and collaborative partnerships with other interested stakeholders. I look forward to providing updates on our future progress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at demetrios.melis@vec.virginia.gov with any questions or feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Melis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Demetrios J. Melis
Commissioner

Attachment 1: Escalation Cases by Submission Source in Quarter 4, FY 2025

Attachment 2: Outreach Visits by VEC in Quarter 4, FY 2025

Escalation Submission Source	Cases Received	Cases Closed	Avg. 1st Contact Time (Hours)	Avg. Case Turnaround Time (Days)
Agency/Internal	1,085	1,076	66.92	6.5
Customer Web Form	6,118	6,114	54.39	4.2
Governor's Office	184	182	29.79	11.0
Legislator	490	483	43.24	7.2
Total	7,877	7,855	54.84	4.9



