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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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**SENATE RESOLUTION**

**No. 138**      Session of  
2001

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INTRODUCED BY TARTAGLIONE, LAVALLE, EARLL, M. WHITE, STOUT,  
O'PAKE, KUKOVICH, BELL, MUSTO, MELLOW, COSTA, ERICKSON,  
BODACK, LEMMOND, FUMO, BOSCOLA, LOGAN, SCHWARTZ AND ORIE,  
DECEMBER 3, 2001

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REFERRED TO LABOR AND INDUSTRY, DECEMBER 3, 2001

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A RESOLUTION

1    Calling on the Joint State Government Commission to form a task  
2        force to investigate unemployment compensation call centers.

3        WHEREAS, Recent statistics show that 275,000 Pennsylvanians  
4    are currently unemployed; and

5        WHEREAS, Many of those in this Commonwealth who are  
6    unemployed rely on the assistance of unemployment compensation;  
7    and

8        WHEREAS, In 1999 an unemployment compensation service center  
9    was opened in Allentown, and during 2000 five additional  
10   unemployment compensation service centers were opened in Erie,  
11   Altoona, Philadelphia, Scranton and Lancaster; and

12        WHEREAS, The disastrous events of September 11, 2001, have  
13   created an influx of thousands of unemployed individuals in need  
14   of the services provided by these unemployment compensation  
15   service centers; and

16        WHEREAS, Persons trying to reach these new unemployment  
17   compensation service centers may do so only by telephone and

1 have been met with continual barriers to filing their claims,  
2 such as persistent busy signals, unanswered calls, misplaced  
3 paperwork, insufficiently trained staff and technical  
4 difficulties accessing the automated system; and

5 WHEREAS, Thousands of claimants are waiting from 6 to 11  
6 weeks for decisions on their claims and there may be a backlog  
7 of thousands more such claims; and

8 WHEREAS, Persons in need of assistance filing their  
9 unemployment compensation claims are not able to meet face-to-  
10 face with a person who can assist them with their filing needs;  
11 and

12 WHEREAS, The needs of citizens of this Commonwealth who do  
13 not speak English are not being met by the language assistance  
14 program utilized by the Department of Labor and Industry,  
15 forcing non-English-speaking persons to access the system with  
16 the aid of someone who speaks English; and

17 WHEREAS, In spite of numerous claims by the Department of  
18 Labor and Industry that the department has addressed the  
19 problems surrounding the new unemployment compensation service  
20 centers and assurances made by the department that the centers  
21 are operating efficiently and effectively, unemployed  
22 Pennsylvanians continually have problems with the call centers;  
23 and

24 WHEREAS, The new unemployment compensation service centers  
25 are clearly not meeting the needs of Pennsylvania's population  
26 of unemployed persons; therefore be it

27 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Joint State Government  
28 Commission to create a bipartisan task force consisting of two  
29 members appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate,  
30 two members appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, two

1 members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
2 and two members appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of  
3 Representatives; and be it further

4       RESOLVED, That the task force study the operation of the  
5 unemployment compensation service centers and provide  
6 recommendations to address the problems affecting the efficient  
7 operation of the new centers and preventing claimants from  
8 receiving benefits in a timely manner; and be it further

9       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission report  
10 its findings to the Senate as soon as possible.