

SPEEA working with Kansas DOL after Spirit refuses to provide data needed for unemployment benefits



WICHITA, Kan. – With Spirit AeroSystems continuing to be “non-responsive” to requests by the Kansas Department of Labor (DOL) for information needed to start unemployment benefits for laid-off workers, state officials turned to, and received the data, from the employees’ labor union, to resolve and clarify issues.

With several hundred workers waiting for benefit checks, the state and the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001, are working together so employees laid off by Spirit start receiving unemployment benefits.

“People need their benefits,” said SPEEA Midwest Director Bob Brewer. “It’s disheartening to think Spirit would delay providing basic information about laid-off workers to the state, but that is exactly what Spirit is doing.”

As a result of unemployment law changes July 1, severance packages can mean lengthy delays before employees can receive state benefits. Many questions and concerns arose surrounding the changes and the impacts of the new law to laid-off workers. SPEEA has hosted a number of Rapid Response, benefit and retirement meetings for laid-off employees since the first round of layoffs in July.

During conversations with state officials, SPEEA learned the DOL did not have details/knowledge of the 60-day wage extensions, severance packages associated with the layoffs, the Spirit Voluntary Lay Off Program, or the Spirit Voluntary Retirement Program. The state also lacked the names and addresses of employees laid off by Spirit on Sept. 12. With unemployment benefits under the new law more dependent on an individual employee’s situation, the state needs accurate, timely and complete information from employers.

“This is information the company has and could easily provide,” Brewer said. “State officials were very appreciative SPEEA was able to help and help get things moving so laid-off employees can start receiving the benefits they earned and deserve.”

A local of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), SPEEA represents 26,400 aerospace professionals at Spirit and Boeing in Kansas, Washington, Oregon and California; and at Triumph Composite Systems, Inc., in Spokane, Washington.

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