



Strategic Services on
Unemployment and
Workers' Compensation



National Foundation for
Unemployment Compensation & Workers' Compensation

30th Annual National UI Issues Conference
St. Louis, Missouri

2011 Award Recipients

Each year UWC accepts nominations for awards to individuals who have made outstanding contributions in research, public policy, UI system integrity and contributions to UWC. A Recognition Awards committee reviews nominations and selects individuals for recognition at the annual National UI Issues Conference.

The **J. Eldred Hill, Jr., Award** is named after J. Eldred Hill, Jr., former president of UWC (then UBA), and is given to an individual for excellence in the public policy arena in service to the employer community.

The **UI Integrity Award** is given to an individual who has demonstrated commitment to preserving the integrity of the unemployment system.

This year, UWC and NFUCWC would like to recognize one individual for the J. Eldred Hill, Jr. Award and two individuals for the UI Integrity Award.

Please join me in congratulating these outstanding individuals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Douglas J. Holmes'.

President

Cheryl Atkinson

J. Eldred Hill, Jr. Award

Cheryl Atkinson retired in 2009 after a professional career dedicated to Unemployment Insurance. Cheryl served as the Administrator of (UI) programs from 2002-2009 for US DOL, capping a career of over 30 years in which she served in leadership capacities at USDOL and the Interstate Conference of Employment Security Agencies where she was the Unemployment Insurance Director.

Ms. Atkinson worked effectively for decades with UWC, UBA, and employer organizations to increase understanding about the UI program, to listen to concerns expressed by employers and their representatives, and to respond with insightful solutions. She served as a regular presenter at UWC's National Foundation for Unemployment Compensation and Workers' Compensation National UI Issues conference.



Cheryl Atkinson receives J. Eldred Hill, Jr. Award from Doug Holmes.

Reemployment. Under Ms. Atkinson's leadership, a goal for reemployment of UI beneficiaries was established for the first time in the history of the UI program. This is now a Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goal recognizing that facilitating reemployment of UI beneficiaries is an important state UI agency responsibility. Ms. Atkinson recognized that expeditious reemployment is good fiscal policy that helps to maintain UI trust fund solvency and minimize UI tax burden, and that it is also good social policy that helps individuals return quickly to work and economic productivity. Ms. Atkinson actively promoted the idea of in-person assessments of UI beneficiaries to ensure workers who have returned to work are no longer receiving benefit payments and to assist those still unemployed in returning to work quickly. Known as the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program, the initiative has reduced the duration of unemployment and resulted in cost savings to employers.

Eliminating Improper Payments. Ms. Atkinson established a state performance goal and aggressively promoted states' efforts to detect, prevent and collect UI improper payments, and successfully promoted legislation to provide states access to the National Directory of New Hires database – a valuable tool to detect individuals who have returned to work but who continue to collect UI – the leading cause of improper UI benefit payments. Ms. Atkinson supported development of the SIDES system and other automated systems to be used for communication between the state agencies and employers to obtain information needed to timely and accurately determine UI eligibility.

Technological Innovations. Under Ms. Atkinson leadership, technology has been used to promote reemployment and improving financial integrity. In response to research showing that about half of America's Job Bank job orders and work resumes were assigned incorrect occupational codes, Ms. Atkinson explored ways to correct this problem and put resources behind providing a software tool, known as AutoCoder, to the states that assigns accurate occupational codes to individuals relatively inexpensively. This tool can support strategic planning by identifying skills gaps and guiding the investment of scarce training resources.

Cheryl Atkinson's professional career dedicated to Unemployment Insurance, her work with UWC and the National Foundation for Unemployment Compensation and Workers' Compensation place her among a small number of individuals who have had significant impact on the Unemployment Insurance program in the policy arena.

We are pleased to recognize Cheryl with the distinction of being selected for the J. Eldred Hill, Jr. Award.

Kristen Cox

UWC 2011 UI Integrity Award

Upon taking office in 2007, Executive Director Cox established a vision for the Utah Department of Workforce Services that emphasized policies for improvement of the integrity of the state's Unemployment Insurance program. To obtain that vision, she created within the Department a commitment and dedication to implementing innovative programs and proactive policies to insure that claimants were properly entitled to the benefits paid to them and to assist UI claimants in their return to work.

An example of Utah's innovative programs is its Worker Profiling Reemployment Services (WPRS) initiative that verifies the eligibility of claimants to receive their weekly benefits by asking whether they are able and available for work and reviewing the acceptability of their job search activities.

In 2009, Utah implemented an online eligibility review system with expanded capabilities. The system allows much fuller and richer screening of claimant responses so staff can focus only on those claims that have a potential eligibility issue. Utah has lowered staffing requirements while experiencing an eight-fold increase (now 25%) in weekly initial claims reviewed.

An example of Utah's proactive policies is a comprehensive portfolio of services designed to reduce the time UI claimants receive UI benefits through a coordinated delivery of programs (through ES/WIA) to assist claimants in timely and effective reemployment. Examples of initiatives included in the portfolio of services are:

- Utah Back to Work Project
- Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment Initiative
- Online Job Matching

Another significant impact on UI program integrity is Utah's New Hire Reporting system that provides timely and accurate information as to when UI claimants have begun a new job. This enables Utah to identify claimants who have not properly reported the wages from new employment and minimizes the amount of over payments to these claimants.

For every dollar spent in identification and collection of benefit overpayments, \$5.50 has been recovered. Utah's ratio of accounts receivable to taxes due is 1% (6th lowest in the nation). An e-mail notification and electronic correspondence system for employers and claimants (which received USDOL's 2010 Innovation Award) to facilitate the timely reporting of contribution reports, enables 64% of employers to report those reports on-line with a 95% timely rate (4th highest in the country). All of which have significant impact on the integrity of Utah's UI program.

We are pleased to recognize Kristen Cox with the UI Integrity Award.



Bill Starks (L) accepts UI Integrity Award for Kristen Cox from Don Peitersen.

Mark Perlberg

UI Integrity Award

As Vice President of the Florida Association of Professional Employer Organizations, Mr. Perlberg led an industry discussion to create a proposal to reform Florida's unemployment compensation system.

For the last 10 years employers throughout the state complained about the imbalance in the unemployment compensation referee system. Employees who committed gross negligence in their jobs or even crimes were given unemployment benefits at their former employer's expense. While many knew there was a problem in the system no one had a proposal for reform.

Although Mr. Perlberg is not an unemployment compensation expert, he led a discussion among UI experts to develop a list of necessary reforms. The efforts Mr. Perlberg and his industry committee created the core the proposals that were eventually enacted by the Florida Legislature. Without Mr. Perlberg's efforts these reforms would never have been considered or proposed.

- Restoring the balance of interpretation within the law so employers and employees are treated equally.
- Improving the definition of misconduct to ensure employees whose conduct should prevent them from receiving benefits bars them from receiving such benefits.
- Encouraging employees to take jobs that are suitable and available rather than choosing to remain receiving unemployment compensation.

While these are common sense proposals for reform, often it requires a leader and a whole lot of work to uncover them and put them into a format lawmakers can consider. This is the hard work that Mr. Perlberg performed.

Each of these proposals will improve the integrity of the unemployment compensation system in Florida.

We are pleased to recognize Mr. Perlberg's leadership in advancing UI Integrity in 2011.



Hal Meyer (L) presents UI Integrity Award to Representative from Oasis Outsourcing accepting for Mark Perlberg.

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