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Unemployment checks may take several weeks

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- West Virginians who qualify for extended jobless benefits will have to wait about a month before they get their checks, the state's unemployment compensation chief says.

Last week, state legislators unanimously voted to lengthen unemployment benefits another 20 weeks for people who've run out. All funding will come from the federal stimulus package.

The [U.S. Department of Labor](#) still must review the legislation, said state Unemployment Compensation Director Michael Moore.

Moore's department also must program its computers to handle the changes, he said.

"We've got some programming that we have to do, and we're working on it as diligently as we can with the staff that we have," he said.

That may take three to four weeks. The benefits are retroactive, he said: "In the long run, nobody's going to miss out on any dollars; they're just not going to have it in hand for a little bit."

Most states that have passed similar legislation have taken about eight weeks to send out the benefit checks, said policy analyst Paul Miller of the [West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy](#).

"I think we're going to be in a much better situation than other states," Miller said.

Analysts have projected that up to 4,000 West Virginians could run out of benefits by the end of September.