



# NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Oklahoma Collects Millions in Wage Levy Program

**OKLAHOMA CITY, OK** (August 5, 2013) - The Benefit Payment Control Unit of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) has reported that it has collected almost \$13 million in unemployment benefit overpayments due to fraud or claimant error through its Wage Levy Program since the inception of the program in 2003. Under Oklahoma law, the OESC investigates all suspected benefit overpayment cases and determines if a claimant received unemployment benefits that he or she was not entitled to. If it is not paid off in a reasonable period of time, the overpayment determination will become the equivalent of a judgment. The OESC is then able to administratively place a levy on the current wages of the overpaid claimant. The levy works the same as a continuing wage garnishment issued by a district court.

Becky Andre, Assistant Chief of the Collections Unit, said, "This program was first implemented in 2003. In that year, the unit collected about \$250,000 through the Wage Levy Program, and it has taken off from there. Each year we have improved our performance and gained more expertise. We are now collecting about \$2,000,000 per year and rising."

Statutory language creating the program was drafted by OESC and passed by the legislature in 2002. According to General Counsel John Miley, "The program has saved the state money in collection expenses while greatly increasing the amount of money collected. Leadership and staff in the Benefit Payment Control Unit have really worked hard on the program to get it to this level. The program is a key element in the overall integrity of the Unemployment Insurance Program and for the protection of Oklahoma's Unemployment Trust Fund. It is gratifying to see that it has become so successful."

Money recouped through the Wage Levy Program is returned to the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. This ultimately contributes to a more solvent fund and lower tax rates for Oklahoma employers.

**About OESC** – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission is Oklahoma's state workforce agency. OESC provides unemployment compensation to support unemployed workers and their communities; matches jobs and workers to benefit local labor markets; prepares a skilled workforce to meet employers' needs; and gathers, analyzes and disseminates information about the labor force to improve local economic decisions.

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