



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **OESC GARNISHMENT PROGRAM RECOUPS TAXPAYER MONEY** *More Than \$1 Million in Unemployment Benefit Overpayments Collected by Program So Far*

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) announced today that a 21-month-old agency program has recovered more than \$1 million in unemployment benefit overpayments that would not have been repaid otherwise. The agency's Benefit Payment Control (BPC) unit launched a wage garnishment program in April 2003 to go after those who refuse to pay back benefit overpayments. So far the program has proven to be a big success.

The wage garnishment program allows the OESC to collect a portion of a person's paycheck if they owe money due to an unemployment benefit overpayment. The program has accounted for over \$750,000 of the \$2,980,826 in overpayments collected so far in 2004.

The law that established the garnishment program in 2002 states, in part, that once an overpayment becomes final, and the amount is past due for over 90 days, the OESC may issue a warrant of levy on this amount. The money recouped through garnishments is money that claimants have refused to repay and would not have been collected without this program.

**This wage garnishment program is seen by the OESC as a last resort in collecting overpayments.** The BPC unit is very willing to make payment arrangements with claimants, and as long as a claimant is making regular payments, no levy will be filed. It is only when the claimant refuses to make payments or otherwise work with the agency that they are subject to this remedy.

The BPC unit began the year with only one person working on wage garnishments, but since the program has been so effective, personnel has tripled.

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