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## Jennifer Lord

Partner, Pitt McGehee Palmer & Rivers PC, Royal Oak

By [Chad Halcom](#)



Jennifer Lord

It would seem MiDAS, the state software platform that checks unemployment claims against other records and flags possible fraud, didn't start with such a golden touch.

Jennifer Lord said the **Pitt McGehee** firm in Royal Oak has collected more than 1,000 callers so far who reported damages after their unemployment benefits were improperly flagged by the \$47 million Michigan Integrated Data Automated System, which went online in 2012.

Lord is handling a prospective class-action lawsuit at the state **Court of Claims** against the **Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency** on behalf of thousands who lost benefits or faced wage garnishment, lost tax refunds or other judgments based on a MiDAS determination.

A February audit found only 263 out of 3,460, or 8 percent, of appealed rulings from 2013 to 2015 were actually upheld. Judge Cynthia Stephens denied a state bid to scrap the suit based on governmental immunity in May, and the case is on hold while UIA

contests that ruling at the Court of Appeals.

"Because it's a governmental immunity issue, they don't have to ask permission to appeal, it's automatic," she said. "We're optimistically confident that the appeals court will uphold Judge Stephens' decision."

The state has said automated findings of fraud now get reviewed, and a bill that requires more human oversight of MiDAS and a certified mail notice to beneficiaries is in a House committee.

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