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N E W S R E L E A S E

Unemployment Rate Declines for Eighth Month in a Row

BATON ROUGE – Louisiana’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased to 4.6 percent in December. This is the eighth consecutive month the unemployment rate has declined. Compared to December 2016, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate has decreased 1.4 percentage points. The last time the unemployment rate was lower was in March 2008.

Seasonally adjusted nonfarm job data released today by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics shows that nonfarm employment increased by 5,500 jobs from December 2016. This is the eighth straight gain in nonfarm jobs over-the-year. From November 2017, nonfarm jobs decreased to 1,974,500.

The number of seasonally adjusted private sector jobs increased by 10,500 from December 2016. This is the ninth straight month that the private sector has added jobs over-the-year. From November 2017, private sector jobs increased by 800 to 1,656,400.

“While there remains room for improvement, we are pleased to see consistent declines in the state unemployment rate and continued over-the-year improvement in job opportunities,” said Ava Dejoie, Executive Director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission. “The increasing vitality of the state’s labor market is evidenced by every new hire, and we expect to see additional growth moving forward.”

The civilian labor force, or the number of people who are employed in addition to those looking for work increased by 18,375 from November 2017 to 2,116,924. Compared to December 2016, this figure is up approximately 16,510.

The number of seasonally adjusted employed individuals increased by 19,196 from November 2017 to 2,019,587. The number of seasonally adjusted employed individuals increased by 45,088 compared to the same time last year. From November 2017, the number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals decreased to 97,337. This is the lowest number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals for the year, and also the lowest since May 2008. Compared to December 2016, the number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals has declined by 28,578.

The increase in the civilian labor force this month positively affected the labor force participation rate, a measure indicating the share of residents engaged in the labor market. The labor force participation rate increased over the month from 58.2 percent to 58.7 percent.

Industries that showed the largest gains for seasonally adjusted jobs:

- **Construction** gained 1,300 jobs for the month and is up 10,100 jobs for the year.
- **Manufacturing** gained 1,100 jobs for the month and is up 1,400 jobs for the year.
- **Leisure and Hospitality** gained 600 jobs for the month and is up 5,500 jobs for the year.

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- **Education & Health Services** gained 300 jobs for the month and is up 3,100 jobs for the year.

Among other seasonally adjusted sectors in December:

- **Financial Activities** gained 400 jobs for the month and is up 500 jobs for the year.
- **Mining and Logging**, which includes industries in the oil and gas sector, lost 300 jobs for the month, but is up 800 jobs for the year. This is the second consecutive over-the-year gain.

Among Louisiana's metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), remaining seasonally adjusted data shows:

- Alexandria gained 200 jobs from November 2017 and remained unchanged from December 2016.
- Baton Rouge gained 1,300 jobs from November 2017 and 9,000 jobs from December 2016. The Baton Rouge MSA has had 12 straight over-the-year increases.
- Houma remained unchanged from November 2017, but lost 1,500 jobs from December 2016.
- Lafayette lost 1,500 jobs from November 2017, but remained unchanged from December 2016.
- Lake Charles lost 700 jobs from November 2017, but gained 4,200 jobs from December 2016. The Lake Charles MSA has had over-the-year increases for 78 consecutive months.
- Monroe gained 200 jobs from November 2017 and 200 jobs from December 2016. The Monroe MSA has had 15 straight over-the-year increases.
- New Orleans lost 200 jobs from November 2017 and 5,800 jobs from December 2016.
- Shreveport gained 300 jobs from November 2017, but is down 2,100 jobs from December 2016.

The BLS does not report seasonally adjusted data for Hammond, due to the fact that it is a recently designated MSA, and has not yet had time to acquire seasonally adjusted data for the area.

- Hammond lost 200 jobs from November 2017, but is up 600 jobs from December 2016.

Not-seasonally adjusted MSA and individual parish data for December 2017 will be released on January 30, 2018.

Seasonally adjusted data are useful for comparisons among states and the nation. Not-seasonally adjusted data are useful for comparing trends in parishes and metropolitan statistical areas, and for comparing them to the state.

To view all available employment data, visit Louisiana's employment homepage at <http://www.laworks.net> and select Labor Market Information from the top-right menu. Then, select LOIS (Louisiana Occupational Information System) and select Employment and Wage Data listed under Data Trends. To view the BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics for the state, visit <http://data.bls.gov/pdq/querytool.jsp?survey=la>. For BLS nonfarm employment data, click here: <http://data.bls.gov/pdq/querytool.jsp?survey=sm>.

Resources for employers and job seekers

Job-seekers can explore careers, apply for top-rated jobs and connect with local training providers using Louisiana Star Jobs, the LWC's free career tool, at <http://www.laworks.net/Stars/>. Employers looking for workers should visit Louisiana's employment homepage at www.laworks.net. Click on HiRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment) and create an account allowing access to qualified job seekers.

About the Louisiana Workforce Commission

The Louisiana Workforce Commission is an agency of state government that administers programs designed to enhance workforce growth and provide family-sustaining jobs for Louisiana residents. The commission monitors employment, administers unemployment compensation and tax funds, provides training resources for employers and employees and oversees worker compensation benefits. The agency also gathers and supplies information on the labor market and occupational sectors in Louisiana.

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