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N E W S R E L E A S E

Unemployment rate drops for third month in a row

BATON ROUGE – Louisiana’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased to 4.4 percent in March. This figure is down 1.2 percent from March 2017. From February 2018, this figure is down by 0.1 percentage points. The last time the unemployment rate was below this level was in April 2008. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate has not increased since December 2015.

The number of seasonally adjusted employed individuals increased by 46,420 from March 2017 to 2,039,275. From February 2018, the number of employed individuals is up by 6,302. From March 2017, the number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals decreased by 22,571 to 94,779. This is the lowest level of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals since May 2008. From February 2018, unemployed individuals decreased by 298.

The seasonally adjusted civilian labor force, or the number of individuals who are employed in addition to those looking for work increased by 23,849 from March 2017. From February 2018, the seasonally adjusted civilian labor force increased by 6,004.

“Our three leading workforce indicators are all headed in the right direction; employment is up, unemployment is down and the civilian labor force is expanding,” said Ava Dejoie, Executive Director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC). “Job seekers are becoming optimistic in their chances of finding meaningful employment, and employers are more confident in their ability to find the talent they need to staff and expand their businesses.”

Seasonally adjusted data indicates that nonfarm employment added 12,100 jobs from March 2017 to 1,985,100. This is the largest over-the-year gain since May 2015. Nonfarm employment has seen over-the-year gains for six straight months. From February 2018, nonfarm employment increased by 6,800 jobs. There have been over-the-month gains for the past four months, and five out of the last six months.

“To help continue Louisiana’s economic growth, our workers must be able to develop the knowledge and skills they need to compete in today’s more technical economy,” said Dejoie. “That’s why we are working so hard delivering these skill improvement opportunities with Registered Apprenticeship and the Incumbent Worker Training Program. These and other LWC programs help workers gain the relevant skills they need and employers want.”

Seasonally adjusted private-sector employment added 15,100 jobs from March 2017 to 1,660,100. This is also the largest over-the-year gain since May 2015. Additionally, total private-sector employment has added jobs over-the-year for six straight months. From February 2018, private-sector employment added 7,100 jobs. Total private sector employment has added jobs over the month in five of the last six months.

Industries that showed the largest gains for seasonally adjusted jobs:

- **Professional and Business Services** gained 1,900 jobs for the month and 5,400 jobs for the year.
- **Education & Health Services** gained 1,000 jobs for the month and 4,900 jobs for the year. The Education and Health Services employment sector is at a series high for employment.

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- **Other Services**, which includes industries engaged in activities such as equipment and machinery repair and services, gained 500 jobs for the month and 1,900 jobs for the year. The Other Services employment sector is at a series high for employment.

- **Construction** gained 1,200 jobs for the month and 1,500 jobs for the year.

- **Manufacturing** gained 900 jobs for the month and 2,400 jobs for the year. Among other seasonally adjusted sectors in March:

- **Mining & Logging**, which includes industries in the oil and gas sector, lost 100 jobs for the month and 500 jobs for the year.

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

- Alexandria remained unchanged from February 2018, but gained 400 jobs from March 2017.

- Baton Rouge gained 2,800 jobs from February 2018 and 3,400 jobs from March 2017. The Baton Rouge MSA is at a series high for employment.

- Hammond remained unchanged from February 2018, but gained 1,100 jobs from March 2017. The Hammond MSA is at a series high for employment.

- Houma lost 200 jobs from February 2018, but remained unchanged from March 2017.

- Lafayette gained 1,100 jobs from February 2018, but lost 1,700 jobs from March 2017.

- Lake Charles gained 800 jobs from February 2018 and 5,100 jobs from March 2017. The Lake Charles MSA is at a series high for employment.

- Monroe gained 300 jobs from February 2018 and 600 jobs from March 2017.

- New Orleans gained 1,200 jobs from February 2018 and 1,900 jobs from March 2017.

- Shreveport lost 800 jobs from February 2018 and 1,000 jobs from March 2017.

March metropolitan statistical area (MSA) and parish unemployment rates will be released on April 27, 2018. For additional state and MSA data release dates, please click [here](#).

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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