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Nevada's Unemployment Rate Remains at 5.5 Percent for February

The statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was unchanged over the month at 5.5 percent for February, said Bill Anderson, chief economist for the Nevada Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation (DETR). The national unemployment rate was 4.8 percent.

The unemployment rate in the state's three metropolitan areas declined in February. The unemployment rate fell by three-tenths of a percentage point in both Clark County and the Reno-Sparks MSA, and by six-tenths of a percentage point in Carson City. However, the February rates of 5.4 percent, 6.3 percent and 6.9 percent, respectively, remain more than a full percentage point higher than in February 2007.

“Although the Nevada economy added 7,000 jobs over the month, most of the February job gain was due to schools and colleges coming off winter break,” Anderson said. “The rate of employment growth in the state continued its downward trend.”

The statewide job growth rate fell to 0.1 percent over the year, he said. Since February 2007 employment in the state has increased by only 1,300. The construction industry has shed nearly 9,000 jobs, employment in the financial sector has declined by more than 2,000 and at least 6,000 temporary help jobs have been eliminated. While the leisure and hospitality sector as a whole has added workers in the past year, the casino hotels and gaming component, the lifeblood of Nevada's economy, has seen employment decline by more than 3,000 in the past 12 months.

A few industrial sectors have helped to offset the job losses. In contrast to the national trend, Nevada's manufacturing industry has added 900 jobs since last February. Nevada's mining industry has provided hundreds of new jobs, and gold prices well in excess of \$900 per ounce should keep the industry growing. The retail trade sector has added 4,800 jobs since February 2007, and new shopping opportunities abound. The health care sector has added approximately 3,000 jobs during the same period, Anderson said.

“The economic environment in which the Nevada economy operates will remain challenging in the near term,” Anderson said. “Tourism to Las Vegas has weakened

somewhat in recent months. The passenger count at McCarran International Airport has been lower than the year-ago level for three consecutive months, and automobile traffic from Southern California was relatively weak throughout 2007. With most of the new Las Vegas resort construction due for completion in 2009 and later, the Nevada economy may do well to hold steady in 2008.”



DETR is comprised of the Employment Security Division, Equal Rights Commission, Rehabilitation Division, the Information Development and Processing Division and the Research and Analysis Bureau.

DETR works in partnership with the Nevada JobConnect System to connect businesses and workers.