



Montana

Department of Labor and Industry

Commissioner's Office

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January 24, 2012

(HELENA) --- UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DROPS AGAIN

(HELENA) --- Montana's unemployment rate dropped another 0.3% to 6.8% in December after four straight months of decreases. The unemployment rate has plunged by a full percentage point since August. U.S. unemployment has also been receding since August, decreasing 0.6% in the last four months. The U.S. rate fell by 0.2% to 8.5% in December.

"Montana's employment growth has gained momentum in the last half of 2011, posting large job gains and a sizable drop in the unemployment rate, due in part to the strong agriculture economy and the oil activity on the eastern part of the state," said Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly. "The strong employment growth in the second half of the year improves our outlook for 2012 and signals an even stronger economy ahead."

The drop in the unemployment rate is due to an increase of about 1,660 jobs over the last month. December's job counts show over 7,000 jobs added in the last year, which is faster job growth than expected based on Department forecasts. The number of unemployed fell 1,787 over the last month. These total job counts include payroll, self-employed, and agricultural workers.

Payroll employment estimates indicate no change in jobs over the prior month, and a gain of 5,000 payroll jobs over the last year. The Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry posted job losses of 800 jobs, likely due to the slow start of the winter season, which countered job gains in other industries. Both total and payroll job estimates are preliminary and may change during the benchmarking process that is completed at the end of each year to improve accuracy.

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) was unchanged for December, marking two straight months of stable prices. Declines in the energy index offset increases in other prices. The index for all items less food and energy (also called core inflation) increased by 0.1%, ending the year with an annual increase of 2.2%.

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**Unemployment figures are seasonally-adjusted. Seasonally-adjusted numbers remove the effects of events that follow a more or less regular month-to-month pattern each year. These adjustments make nonseasonal patterns easier to*

identify. The margin of error for the unemployment rate is plus or minus 1.0 percentage points at the 90 percent confidence level. All questions relating to the calculation of unemployment rates should be directed to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Research and Analysis Bureau at 1-800-541-3904.

The January 2012 Labor Situation Report will be released on Tuesday, March 13.

******* INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET *******



Visit our website at [www.ourfactsyourfuture](http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org) for additional information and analysis, including answers to questions about the unemployment rate, industry employment levels, and annual employment data for Montana's Indian Reservations. Check out this month's Economy at a Glance article on employment statistics for veterans in Montana! County labor force information can be found by using this link:

<http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/cgi/databrowsing/?PAGEID=4&SUBID=205>