

## NEWS RELEASE

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### October Jobless Rate Drops to Lowest Level in 6½ Years

Idaho's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropped four-tenths of a percentage point to a 6½-year low of 4.1 percent in October despite slowing economic activity by employers.

Last month's drop in the jobless rate - the largest one-month change on record - was driven by a combination of rising employment and a declining labor force.

October's unemployment rate is the lowest since March 2008. The state's four-tenths of a percentage point decline from September overwhelmed the one-tenth drop in the national rate, which has been higher than Idaho's for more than 13 years.

The estimates by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics are preliminary for October and will be revised in March along with those for the rest of the year based on additional employment data gathered over the coming months.

Total employment rose 1,200 to a record 742,400 as the labor force fell 1,500 to below 775,000, its lowest level since January 2013. Idaho's participation rate - the share of the working-age population with jobs or looking for jobs - dropped two-tenths of a point to 63.1 percent, the lowest level since July 1976. According to department analysts the decrease largely reflects retirements and a slowdown in economic activity.

Idaho's jobless rate has fallen nearly two percentage points in the past year from 5.9 percent in October 2013, while total employment has risen more than 13,000 in that time.

Considering a comparatively weak job generation from September to October, some department analysts believe most of the increased employment over the month may have been among workers operating one-person businesses as sole proprietors.

Jobs covered by the unemployment insurance system remained under 666,000 in October - just 1.9 percent higher than a year earlier and the first month year-over-year job growth has been below 2 percent since September 2012.

New hires reported by businesses in October reached 21,000, the highest October level since 1999, but nearly all were to fill existing jobs opened through retirements or other forms of job departures.

Hiring for new jobs fell below the five-year average in construction, natural resources, financial services and retail and wholesale trade. Manufacturers brought on new workers at a rate just fractionally higher than normal due to an increase in food processing, where the average annual wage in 2013 was about \$15,000 less than for durable manufacturing.

While the job mix statewide has shifted toward services since 2007, job growth during the recovery has increased to the point that the statewide total is approaching the prerecession peak.

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Unemployment insurance benefit payments continued to run below year-earlier levels, totaling \$5.8 million to a weekly average of 5,300 jobless workers in October. That compared to \$6.8 million in regular benefits paid to a weekly average of 6,400 workers in October 2013 plus another \$2.4 million in federally financed benefits to a weekly average of 2,400. Federally funded benefits ended at the close of 2013.

The number of jobless workers collecting weekly benefit payments was approaching the 20-year lows of 2006, and the percentage of unemployed getting benefits has fallen dramatically from the depth of the economic downturn. Last month 17 percent of the unemployed were receiving benefits compared to 47 percent in October of 2010

For the fifth straight month, there were no Idaho counties with double-digit unemployment rates. Only four counties posted higher rates in October than in September - Teton, Camas, Franklin and Oneida - each with rates below 3.5 percent.

Twenty-nine of Idaho's 44 counties had rates below the statewide rate. The highest was in Adams County at 6.7 percent while the lowest was in Clark County at 1.8 percent. The last time a county posted a rate below 2 percent was Teton County at 1.9 percent in February 2008.

All five metropolitan areas saw rates decline from September and none posted a rate over 4 percent.

<b>Seasonally Adjusted Data</b>	<b>10/14</b>	<b>9/14</b>	<b>10/13</b>
Civilian Labor Force	774,400	775,900	775,300
Unemployment	32,000	34,700	45,500
% Labor Force Unemployed	4.1	4.5	5.9
Total Employment	742,400	741,200	729,800
<b>Unadjusted Forecast Data</b>			
Civilian Labor Force	776,200	772,900	776,000
Unemployment	24,700	27,300	41,700
% Labor Force Unemployed	3.2	3.5	5.4
Total Employment	751,500	745,600	734,300

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