U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee

Understanding the Economy: State-by-State Snapshots

Executive Summary

This is the fifth edition of state-by-state snapshots issued by the Joint Economic Committee during the 112th Congress and includes data through April 2011.

This month's report shows that the economic recovery is translating into economic expansion in most states. At the national level, employment gains have been strong in the past three months, with the private sector adding more than 230,000 jobs in each of the last three months. Additionally, the ISM Manufacturing Index shows expansion in the manufacturing sector for 21 consecutive months. While U.S. economy continues a moderate recovery (GDP grew by 1.8 percent in the first quarter of 2011), the economy has now grown for seven consecutive quarters.

Against this national backdrop, the report highlights progress at the state level in creating private-sector jobs and reducing unemployment and tracks the employment gains in key sectors, including manufacturing and professional and business services. Highlights include:

- Forty-two states and the District of Columbia added private-sector jobs in April. New York's private sector saw the largest expansion during the month, adding 43,800 jobs. Texas (34,000) and Pennsylvania (24,800) achieved the next largest private-sector job gains. In the past 12 months, Texas (253,600), California (203,400), New York (98,300) and Pennsylvania (93,700) have added the most private-sector jobs. Kansas is the only state to have lost private-sector jobs in the past year. Ten states (North Dakota, Alaska, Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Michigan, Arkansas, Oregon, South Carolina and West Virginia) experienced private-sector employment gains of 2 percent or greater from April 2010 to April 2011.

- Thirty-nine states saw their unemployment rates decline in April. Nevada had the largest drop (0.7 percentage point). New Mexico and Oklahoma each experienced declines of 0.5 percentage point. Fifteen other states recorded declines that were statistically significant. Even after falling by 2.4 percentage points since December 2010, Nevada has the highest unemployment rate in the nation – 12.5 percent. California is the next highest, at 11.9 percent. In the past 12 months, Michigan has achieved the largest decline in the unemployment rate (2.9 percentage points), followed by Nevada (2.4 percentage points). The national unemployment rate in April was 9.0 percent.

- The manufacturing sector expanded in 37 states in April. The largest gains were in Illinois, which added 4,200 manufacturing jobs. Overall, the United States has added nearly 200,000 manufacturing jobs in the past twelve months. These gains have been concentrated in the Midwest, with Michigan (22,500), Wisconsin (16,500), Texas (10,500), Ohio (10,200) and Pennsylvania (10,000) adding the largest number of manufacturing positions in the past year.

- Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia added jobs in the professional and business services sector in April. New York (9,300), Pennsylvania (8,200) and Georgia (8,100) posted the largest increases. In the past year, more than 500,000 professional and business services jobs have been added nationwide, with California (58,800) and Texas (57,900) showing the largest gains.

- The leisure and hospitality sector added jobs in 31 states. In the past 12 months, 43 states have added positions in the sector. 224,000 leisure and hospitality positions have been added nationwide in the past year.

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