



For Immediate Release

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South Carolina's Employment Situation February 2011

*Employment Continues To Make Progress
Unemployment Rate Declines*

February maintained positive momentum as employment estimates increased for the sixth consecutive month. Additionally, a declining unemployment rate was welcome news for February. Seasonally adjusted, the unemployment rate decreased to 10.2 percent - an improvement of three-tenths of a percent from a 10.5 percent rate for January. An additional 3,744 people found employment in February when compared to January's levels. Since February of 2010, the state has seen employment rise by approximately 18,100 to an estimated level of 1,935,449.

Current estimates show there are approximately 218,940 unemployed people in the state, a decrease of approximately 33,000 from a year ago.

After consecutive increases in the last four months of 2010, the state saw a decline in the labor force for two consecutive months. February's estimate showed a decrease of 4,567 for an overall level of 2,154,389. The total labor force has seen a reduction of approximately 14,989 people since February of 2010. Going forward, this measurement will warrant close monitoring as it may indicate some discouragement over job prospects.

The national rate also dropped one-tenth of a percent from 9.0 percent in January to 8.9 percent in February. Recent available data (November - January) for neighboring states showed little movement in the unemployment rate. Georgia's unemployment rate averaged 10.4 percent, while North Carolina averaged 9.8 percent and Tennessee 9.4 percent. Over the past several months, South Carolina and Tennessee have shown similar gains in employment while there has been little to no improvement in either North Carolina or Georgia.

The establishment payroll survey showed gains through nearly all industries - an estimated increase of 22,500 nonagricultural jobs in February (not seasonally adjusted).

Some of the noted areas of improvement were:

- Leisure and Hospitality: 4,600
- Professional and Business Services: 4,500
- Education and Health Services: 4,000
- Construction: 2,500 – first increase since October, 2010
- Retail Trade: 1,500
- Manufacturing: 900
- Government: 2,200 – mostly driven by state government education services personnel returning from year – end holiday break

The estimated job count from the payroll survey for February was 24,200 above the year-ago level.

“Employment in South Carolina continues to improve,” said SC Department of Employment and Workforce Executive Director John Finan. “We are encouraged about consecutive monthly employment gains, and as spring approaches, we optimistically look toward an improving economy.”

***Note:** Due to a minor software change by the Bureau of Labor Statistics the county data will be published on April 6.