

Illinois' rate of unemployment among worst in the nation

By Gail MarksJarvis Chicago Tribune

Illinois has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country.

In January, Illinois' unemployment rate was 6.3 percent, far higher than the nation's 4.9 percent for the same month, according to the latest information released Monday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Only three other states plus the District of Columbia have unemployment rates worse than Illinois: Mississippi at 6.9 percent; Alaska at 6.6 percent; New Mexico at 6.5 percent; and D.C. at 6.5 percent.

Over the last year, Illinois added 49,600 jobs, but there were not enough added to make up for those lost. In January 2015, the state's unemployment rate was better at 6 percent.

The state added about 10,000 construction jobs over the last year but lost about 5,100 in manufacturing. It also added 15,200 in education and health care, and 4,500 in professional services jobs. The greatest increase was in an area typically with lower-paying jobs: Leisure and hospitality, which includes restaurants and hotels, added 20,700 jobs.

In January, 30 states added jobs and 20 had decreases. The nation's largest employment increases over the last year were in California, with an increase of 444,900 jobs; Florida, up 263,000 jobs; and Texas, up 187,400.

The states with the strongest employment figures in January were North Dakota and South Dakota, each with only a 2.8 percent unemployment rate, and New Hampshire at 2.9 percent. Yet with the oil industry hit by plunging oil prices, North Dakota lost 21,100 jobs over the last year.
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