

March 14, 2012

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## Government, coal employment up; Manufacturing jobs see dramatic drop

By Paul J. Nyden

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- In January, West Virginia enjoyed its largest single monthly job gain during the past three years, since the beginning of the recession in December 2007.

Non-farm employment rose by 3,100 jobs, reaching 763,990 jobs, according to Jobs Count, a monthly newsletter published by the West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy.

But today, the state's unemployment rate is still 7.4 percent, compared to 4.1 percent three years ago.

Employment levels rose in government, hospitality, coal mining, logging and professional jobs. But it continued to drop dramatically in manufacturing industries.

Manufacturing jobs dropped by 700 in January alone, falling to a record low of 48,700 jobs — about 9,000 manufacturing jobs less than existed before the recession began.

That trend could be countered, at least a little bit, if the Century Aluminum plant reopens in Ravenswood. That would restore 450 manufacturing jobs immediately and up to 650 jobs, or more, in coming years.

Education and health services, which actually gained 9,100 jobs since the recession began, lost 700 jobs in January, according to Jobs Count.

But in January, West Virginia saw increases of 5,900 jobs in state and local government, 1,500 jobs in leisure and hospitality and 500 jobs each in mining, logging and professional services.

Mining and logging jobs increased by 21.5 percent between December 2007 and January 2012.

But today, West Virginia has about 33,000 fewer residents employed than at the beginning of the recession.

Employment in the Mountain State varies dramatically by age.

Young people, between the ages of 16 and 24, are only 13.6 percent of the state's labor force. But they make up 34 percent of all the unemployed workers in the state.

Those figures would be even more dramatic if they included young workers who are not considered part of the work force, often because they gave up looking for jobs, according to the report.

In 2001, 47 percent of all West Virginians between 16 and 19 were part of the work force. By 2011, that figure dropped to 31 percent — the lowest since 1978, Jobs Count pointed out.

Since the beginning of the recession, the rate of recent high school graduates attending college has remained stable, rising slightly from 50.1 percent to 50.3 percent.

The Center for Budget & Policy stated, "The dramatic drop in labor force participation and high rates of unemployment among young workers should be a major policy concern for lawmakers."

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Wow, during a recession, WV added 5,900 more bureaucrats to leach off of WV Taxpayers while losing 9,000 private sector jobs???????????

Posted at: March 15, 2012 7:18:16 am

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More mining jobs? Imagine that! Is that a result of the so called "war on coal"?

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