

## Ohio among worst in job losses

### Skid outlasted recession, report shows

By [William Hershey](#)

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**COLUMBUS** | — Although economists pronounced the national recession over by November 2001, Ohio continued to lose jobs in the aftermath, according to a report released today by a Cleveland research institute.

The study by Policy Matters Ohio showed that in July 2004, the last month for which state-by-state data is available, Ohio had 217,000 fewer jobs than when the recession began in March 2001.

The report, *The State of Working Ohio 2004*, said, "2003 was a tough year for workers in Ohio, where jobs continued to disappear and median hourly wages fell for the third straight year."

The 3.9 percent drop in jobs from the beginning of the recession through July was greater than in all other states except Massachusetts and Michigan, the report said. The number of jobs in Ohio declined from 5,591,400 in March 2001 to 5,374,400 in July.

Since the end of 2003, Ohio has added 19,700 jobs.

"At that rate, it would take more than six years to reach prerecession levels," the study said.

The study also found that in 2003, the year-end median wage — the wage at the halfway point between the highest and lowest — was \$13.14 an hour, lower than in any of the previous four years.

Ohio's median wage in 2003 was below the national median wage of \$13.62 an hour, the report said.

Release of the report comes against the backdrop of a presidential campaign in which the economy has emerged as a key issue.

An Ohio Poll, conducted Aug. 11-17, found that the economy topped foreign policy as the issue that likely Ohio voters most often cite as most important in determining who they will pick for president. In the poll, sponsored by the University of Cincinnati, 33 percent picked the economy as the top issue, followed by 23 percent who picked foreign policy.

The same poll, conducted before the Republican National Convention, found Republican President Bush and Democrat Sen. John Kerry in a statistical tie among likely voters, with Kerry at 48 percent, Bush at 46 percent and consumer advocate Ralph Nader at 1 percent.

In his frequent campaign visits to Ohio, Bush has acknowledged that economic challenges remain in Ohio, particularly in manufacturing.

"I fully understand we still face challenges in manufacturing communities and places like Youngstown ? I know there are workers worried about their future. I've got a plan to continue the economic vitality of this state and this country," Bush said during a rally Wednesday at Nationwide Arena in Columbus.

According to the report, Ohio's manufacturing sector, with its relatively high wages, still employs nearly one in six Ohio workers but its share of the work force has dropped from 21.7 percent of the state's jobs in 1990 to 15.4 percent in 2004.

Meanwhile, Roger Altman, a former deputy U.S. Treasury secretary and an adviser to the Kerry campaign, said last week that Republicans made little mention of the economy at their national convention last week because they want to downplay it as an issue in the presidential campaign.

"They ignored it because they don't want to talk about it," Altman said.

In Ohio, Gov. Bob Taft has made job creation the top priority of his second term.

Asked about the Policy Matters' report, Ann Husted, Taft's spokeswoman, said the "movement in the economy is forward. It's slow because retooling Ohio's \$381 billion economy takes time, but the numbers are going in the right direction."

Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit research organization that is funded primarily by the George Gund Foundation of Cleveland.

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