

**Volume #73, Report #54 --Friday, March 19, 2004**[<< back](#)**OHIO UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DECLINED IN FEBRUARY, BUT DOESN'T REFLECT EMPLOYMENT GAINS**

Ohio's rate of unemployment declined to 5.9% in February, down from 6.2% a month earlier, but the decline was attributed to a reduction in the size of the state's workforce and not people finding employment, it was reported Friday by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS).

ODJFS Director Thomas Hayes said in a statement that the decline "was due largely to a decrease in the size of the labor force, which includes those who are seeking jobs, and not gains in employment."

Policy Matters Ohio said the state's job market remained "sluggish" during the month, noting that Ohio has lost 118,300 jobs since the recession officially ended in November of 2001. "We are not seeing the kind of sustained growth in the job market that Ohio needs," PMO Research Director Zach Schiller said.

Total unemployment in Ohio for February was reported at 347,000, down from 368,000 in January. The state's unemployment rate for the same period a year ago was 6.2%

According to ODJFS, nonfarm wage and salary employment in Ohio in February was 5.367 million, down from 5.378 million in January. Service providers reported 10,800 job losses during the period, while government employment increased by 3,500 jobs during the same period. A decline of 1,200 jobs in the manufacturing sector was mostly offset by gains in construction (700 jobs) and natural resources and mining (400 jobs).

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