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Happy Holidays: Ohio, like nation, sees big job gain in November

Ohio received an early Christmas present in the form of November's job report. After months of conflicting data or mediocre growth, the jobs report released today by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is strong almost across the board. Ohio's gain of 17,900 jobs, like the nation's, is one of the largest monthly increases of the recovery. We have to look back to July 2011 to see a larger monthly change. The unemployment report generated from a separate household survey also showed marked improvement, and included a drop in the unemployment rate.

"Today's report is good news for Ohioans, but we still have a lot of lost ground to make up," said Hannah Halbert, workforce researcher with Policy Matters Ohio. "Even with November's gain Ohio grew about half as fast as the nation over the past year."

The monthly numbers are always preliminary and subject to revision and benchmarking. Longer trends are more reliable indicators. The November gain, coming on top of an upward revision of the gain in October, finally pushed Ohio's 12-month growth rate just over the 1 percent mark (1.2 percent). Over the same time, the nation grew by 2.0 percent. That lag matters. The state still needs 89,000 jobs to reach our pre-recession job count. The nation already surpassed that benchmark and has gained an additional 1.2 percent, more than 1.6 million jobs.

The separate household survey showed an improvement in employment, a drop in the number of unemployed by 18,000, and a slight increase in the size of Ohio's labor force. This all added up to a 0.3 percent drop in the state unemployment rate. Ohio's unemployment rate now stands at 5.0 percent. This is the lowest Ohio's unemployment rate has been in 13 years, though employment is below what it was at that time.

"This is welcome news, but Ohio needs many more Novembers to keep pace with the nation," said Halbert. "We are more than five years into recovery and we still have a long way to go."

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*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute
with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*