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Ohio economy for workers badly lags nation's

Ohio's median wage dipped last year to \$16.05 an hour and remains lower than in all but eight of the last 36 years, adjusted for inflation, according to *Left Behind: The State of Working Ohio 2015*, a new report from Policy Matters Ohio. In June, the six-year anniversary of the official end of the 2007 recession, Ohio had fewer jobs than before the recession started, though most states and the country as a whole recovered their job losses more than a year before that. "Weak job growth and real wage decline are at the root of Ohio's deep labor market woes on Labor Day," said Amy Hanauer, executive director of Policy Matters Ohio and report author.

The report found many reasons to be concerned about the economy workers face in Ohio:

- Nationwide, **productivity** grew 238 percent between 1948 and 2014, while average worker compensation grew only 109 percent. Ohio productivity rose 66.9 percent between 1979 and 2014 while inflation-adjusted compensation over that period actually fell, by 1.1 percent.
- Ohio had 35,400 **fewer jobs** in June 2015 than when the recession officially started in December 2007, a 0.7 percent loss. The nation added 2.5 percent to its job base over that period. By June 2015, Ohio had 5.3 million jobs, over 240,000 jobs shy of 2000, the peak job year.
- Ohio **labor force participation** rose through the '80s and '90s but has shrunk since 2003. In 2014, it was at 62.8 percent, lower than at any time since 1979. Between the recession start and June 2015, 236,000 people left Ohio's labor force.
- By July 2015, overall **unemployment** in Ohio and the nation were half what they were at the height of the recent recession, but disparities persisted. At 11.9 percent, the African-American unemployment rate was well over twice that of white Ohioans (4.7 percent) for 2014 (state level demographic unemployment data available only at year end).
- The average income of the top 1 percent of Ohioans was \$852,000 in 2012 versus just over \$40,000 for the bottom 99 percent combined. **Inequality** is even higher at a national level.
- In 2014, Ohio's **median wage**, once more than 8.7 percent above the nation's, was over 5 percent less than the national. Ohio **men** earned \$3.30 more each hour than **women**, \$17.94 compared to \$14.64. The median **black worker** earned just 76 percent of what the median white worker did (down from 90 percent in 1979), \$12.81 vs. \$16.87. **Unionized** workers earned about 32 percent more than non-union workers, \$20.17 an hour compared to \$15.27.

"While the numbers are grim, we see a renewed commitment by many activists, advocates and regular Ohioans to create an Ohio economy that works for everyone," Hanauer said. "Some solutions generating excitement include raising Ohio's minimum wage, building a stronger union economy, and investing in childcare and early education to create jobs, help parents work, and position our children better for tomorrow."