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Statement of

Keith Hall  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Friday, March 4, 2011

In February, nonfarm payroll employment rose by 192,000, and private-sector employment increased by 222,000. The unemployment rate was little changed at 8.9 percent, following large declines in December and January. From its recent low point in February 2010, payroll employment has increased by 1.3 million, or an average of 106,000 per month. Over the same period, private-sector employment rose by 1.5 million, or an average of 127,000 per month. In February, job growth occurred in manufacturing, construction, professional and business services, health care, and transportation and warehousing.

Manufacturing employment continued to rise (+33,000) in February. Since its recent low in December 2009, manufacturing has added 195,000 jobs. Almost all of the February gain was in durable goods, most notably in fabricated metal products (+7,000) and machinery (+9,000). Over the month, the factory workweek rose by 0.1 hour and overtime by 0.2 hour.

Construction employment rose by 33,000 in February, following a job loss of 22,000 in January that may have been related to severe winter weather. Over the month, employment increased among both residential and nonresidential specialty trade contractors.

In the service-providing sector, professional and business services employment expanded by 47,000 over the month and has increased by 601,000 since a recent low point in September 2009. Much of the February gain was in employment services (+29,000) and in management and technical consulting services (+7,000). Within employment services, the number of jobs in temporary help services edged up over the month.

Employment in health care rose by 34,000 in February, mostly in ambulatory health care services (+17,000) and in nursing and residential care facilities (+15,000).

Employment in transportation and warehousing grew by 22,000 in February. Over the past 12 months, this industry has added 103,000 jobs. Half of the increase in February was due to a gain in truck transportation.

Employment in both state and local governments edged down over the month. Local government employment has declined by 377,000 since its peak in September 2008.

Average hourly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls rose by 1 cent in February to \$22.87. Over the past 12

months, average hourly earnings have risen by 1.7 percent. From January 2010 to January 2011, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased by 1.7 percent.

Most measures from the survey of households showed little movement in February. At 8.9 percent, the unemployment rate changed little over the month but is down from 9.8 percent in November. Of the 13.7 million unemployed in February, 43.9 percent had been jobless for 27 weeks or more, essentially the same as in the prior month. In February, the labor force participation rate was unchanged at 64.2 percent.

In summary, nonfarm payroll employment rose by 192,000 over the month, and the unemployment rate was little changed at 8.9 percent.