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Statement of

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Commissioner
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Nonfarm payroll employment increased by 110,000 in March, and the unemployment rate declined to 5.2 percent. Over the year, payroll employment has risen by 2.1 million, and the unemployment rate has trended down from 5.7 percent.

Several industries continued to add jobs in March, notably construction, health care, and mining. In construction, employment rose by 26,000. Since its trough 2 years earlier, employment in this industry has grown by nearly half a million. Most of this gain reflected strength in the components of residential construction; however, employment in nonresidential specialty trade contracting also was up over the 2-year period (122,000). In the health care industry, employment continued to grow, increasing by 16,000 in March. Job growth was split

equally among hospitals and ambulatory health care services. The mining industry added 5,000 jobs in March. In the past 5 months, mining employment has increased by 22,000, largely in support activities for oil and gas operations.

Employment expanded in a few other industries over the month. Wholesale trade added 15,000 jobs. Employment continued to trend up in food services and in credit intermediation.

In most other industries, employment was relatively flat over the month. Employment in both temporary help services and retail trade was little changed in March, after increasing in February. Manufacturing employment also was little changed over the month; on net, the number of factory jobs is down slightly since last summer. Manufacturing hours edged down by one-tenth of an hour in March and factory overtime was down by two-tenths of an hour.

Average hourly earnings of private production or nonsupervisory workers were up by 4 cents in March. Over the year, hourly earnings have increased by 2.6 percent.

Turning to measures from the household survey, both the number of unemployed persons, at 7.7 million, and the unemployment rate, at 5.2 percent, declined in March. Over

the year, the unemployment rate has trended down from 5.7 percent, reflecting declines in the jobless rates for adult men and adult women. The unemployment rate for teenagers was essentially unchanged over the year.

Labor force participation held steady at 65.8 percent over the month, and was little changed from a year earlier. The number of discouraged workers--persons who have given up searching for work--also was essentially unchanged over the year at about half a million.

In summary, payroll employment rose by 110,000 in March, and the unemployment rate declined to 5.2 percent.