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Statement of

Keith Hall  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Friday, April 2, 2010

Nonfarm payroll employment rose by 162,000 in March, and the unemployment rate was 9.7 percent for the third month in a row. Job gains continued in temporary help services and in health care, while job losses occurred in financial activities and in information. The March employment increase also included 48,000 workers hired by the federal government for Census 2010.

Temporary help services employment increased by 40,000 in March. Since last September, employment in this industry has grown by 313,000, or 18 percent.

Health care added 27,000 jobs in March, compared with an average monthly gain of 18,000 over the prior 12 months. Mining employment rose by 8,000 in March. This industry has added 31,000 jobs since last October.

Federal government employment rose over the month, reflecting ramped-up hiring for Census 2010. In March, the

Census Bureau brought on 48,000 temporary workers. Employment in state and local governments was essentially unchanged.

Manufacturing employment continued to trend up in March. Over the last 3 months, manufacturing has added 45,000 jobs, with most of the gains in durable goods industries.

Construction employment held steady in March. This industry had shed an average of 72,000 jobs per month in the prior 12 months.

Employment continued to decline in financial activities (-21,000) and in information (-12,000) in March. Other major industries showed little change in employment.

Average hourly earnings of all employees in the private sector declined by 2 cents in March to \$22.47. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have increased by 1.8 percent. From February 2009 to February 2010, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) rose by 2.2 percent.

Turning to measures from the survey of households, the unemployment rate held at 9.7 percent in March. Over the month, jobless rates for the major worker groups showed little or no change.

Of the 15.0 million persons unemployed in March, 6.5 million had been jobless for 27 weeks or more, an increase of 414,000 over the month. These long-term unemployed made up 44.1 percent of all unemployed persons, a record high.

The employment-population ratio was 58.6 percent in March. This measure has been trending up since its recent low of 58.2 percent in December. Among the employed, the number of individuals working part time who preferred full-time work increased in March to 9.1 million.

In summary, nonfarm payroll employment rose by 162,000 in March, and the unemployment rate held at 9.7 percent.