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Statement of

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Commissioner  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

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Nonfarm payroll employment increased by 126,000 in March, and the unemployment rate was unchanged at 5.5 percent.

Employment continued to trend up in professional and business services, health care, and retail trade. Job losses continued in mining.

Incorporating the revisions for January and February, which reduced nonfarm employment by 69,000, monthly job gains have averaged 197,000 over the past 3 months. In the 12 months prior to March, employment growth averaged 269,000 per month.

Employment in professional and business services continued to trend up in March (+40,000). Job growth in the first quarter of 2015 averaged 34,000 per month in this industry, below the average monthly gain of 59,000 in 2014. Within the industry, most of the jobs gained in the past 3 months were in the professional and technical services component, which had added

jobs throughout 2014. By contrast, employment in the administrative and waste services component (which includes temporary help services) has changed little thus far in 2015, although this component had added an average of 29,000 jobs per month in 2014.

Employment in health care increased by 22,000 over the month, with job gains in ambulatory care services and in hospitals. Employment declined by 6,000 in nursing care facilities in March. Over the past 12 months, health care has added 363,000 jobs.

Retail trade employment continued to trend up in March (+26,000), in line with the average monthly gain over the prior 12 months. Within retail trade, general merchandise stores added 11,000 jobs in March.

Employment in food services and drinking places changed little in March (+9,000), following a large gain in February (+66,000). Job growth in the first quarter of 2015 averaged 33,000 per month in this industry, the same as the average monthly gain in 2014.

Construction employment was essentially unchanged in March (-1,000). Employment in the industry had grown by an average of 26,000 per month over the prior 12 months.

Employment in mining fell by 11,000 in March, bringing job losses for the first quarter of 2015 to a total of 30,000. In

2014, mining had added 41,000 jobs. The declines in the first quarter, as well as the gains in 2014, were concentrated in support activities for mining, which includes support for oil and gas extraction.

Average hourly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls rose by 7 cents in March to \$24.86. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have risen by 2.1 percent. From February 2014 to February 2015, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) declined by 0.1 percent.

Turning now to our survey of households, the unemployment rate held at 5.5 percent in March, and the number of unemployed persons, at 8.6 million, changed little. Both measures are down from a year earlier, by 1.1 percentage points and 1.8 million, respectively. Among the unemployed in March, 29.8 percent had been jobless for 27 weeks or longer.

The labor force participation rate, at 62.7 percent, changed little in March and has remained within a narrow range of 62.7 percent to 62.9 percent since April 2014. The employment-population ratio was 59.3 percent for the third month in a row.

Among those employed in March, the number of people working part time for economic reasons was 6.7 million, little changed over the month. These individuals, who would have preferred full-time employment, were working part time because their hours

had been cut back or because they were unable to find full-time work.

Among people who were neither working nor looking for work in March, 2.1 million were classified as marginally attached to the labor force, little changed over the year. These individuals had not looked for work in the 4 weeks prior to the survey but wanted a job, were available for work, and had looked for a job within the last 12 months. The number of discouraged workers, a subset of the marginally attached who believed that no jobs were available for them, was 738,000 in March, also little changed over the year.

In summary, nonfarm payroll employment increased by 126,000 in March, and the unemployment rate held at 5.5 percent.