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Statement of

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Commissioner
Bureau of Labor Statistics

before the

Joint Economic Committee

UNITED STATES CONGRESS

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the employment and unemployment data we released this morning.

Nonfarm payroll employment increased by 244,000 in April, and the unemployment rate edged up to 9.0 percent. Over the last 3 months, payroll employment has risen by an average of 233,000 compared with an average of 104,000 in the prior 3 months. In April, employment increased in several service-providing industries, manufacturing, and mining.

Retail trade added 57,000 jobs in April. This increase followed 2 months in which retail employment changed little. Over the month, job gains occurred in electronics and appliance

stores, building and garden supply stores, and automobile dealerships. An employment increase in general merchandise stores (+27,000) offset a decline of similar size in March.

Employment in professional and business services rose by 51,000 in April. Since a low point in September 2009, employment in this industry has increased by 745,000. Several component industries continued to add jobs in April, including management and technical consulting services and computer systems design services. Employment in temporary help services was essentially unchanged in April.

Employment in leisure and hospitality grew by 46,000 over the month and by 151,000 in the last 3 months. Food services and drinking places added 27,000 jobs in April and has accounted for nearly two-thirds of the gain in leisure and hospitality since January.

Health care employment continued to increase in April (+37,000). Job growth occurred in ambulatory health care and in hospitals.

In the goods-producing sector, manufacturing employment rose by 29,000 in April. Since December 2009, manufacturing has added a quarter of a million jobs. Durable-goods manufacturing has been the source of this growth. Over the month, job gains continued in machinery, primary metals, and computer and electronic products.

Employment in mining increased by 11,000 in April, following a gain of similar magnitude in March. Most of the growth occurred in support activities for mining. Since a recent low point in October 2009, mining employment has risen by 107,000. Elsewhere in the goods-producing sector, construction employment was about unchanged over the month. It has shown little net movement since early 2010, after falling sharply during the prior 3 years.

Employment in state government and local government continued to trend down in April. Both have been losing jobs since the second half of 2008.

Average hourly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls increased by 3 cents in April to \$22.95. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have risen by 1.9 percent. From March 2010 to March 2011, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) rose by 2.7 percent.

Turning now to measures from the survey of households, the jobless rate edged up from 8.8 to 9.0 percent in April. However, the rate was 0.8 percentage point lower than in November of last year. In April, there were 13.7 million unemployed persons, little changed from the prior month. The number of people unemployed for less than 5 weeks increased by 242,000 in April. The number jobless for 27 weeks and over declined by 283,000 to 5.8 million.

Other household indicators showed little or no change over the month. The labor force participation rate has been 64.2 percent since January. The employment-population ratio was little changed at 58.4 percent in April. Despite increases in household survey employment since late 2009, the ratio has shown little movement. Among the employed, the number of individuals working part time who preferred full-time work was little changed at 8.6 million.

In summary, nonfarm payroll employment rose by 244,000 in April, and the unemployment rate edged up to 9.0 percent.

My colleagues and I now would be glad to answer your questions.