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Statement of

Keith Hall  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Friday, September 2, 2011

Nonfarm payroll employment was unchanged in August, and the unemployment rate held at 9.1 percent. Average job growth over the last 4 months has been markedly lower than during the first 4 months of the year. In August, employment changed little in most major industries.

Health care added 30,000 jobs over the month, with most of the gains occurring in ambulatory health care services and in hospitals. In professional and business services, employment in computer systems design and related services increased by 8,000. Mining employment continued to trend up.

In the information sector, employment fell by 48,000 over the month, largely reflecting a strike by 45,000 telecommunications workers.

Manufacturing employment was essentially unchanged in August. For the past 4 months, manufacturing has added an

average of 14,000 jobs per month, compared with an average of 35,000 per month for the first 4 months of the year.

Local government employment continued to trend down in August. State government employment was little changed, despite the return of an estimated 22,000 Minnesota state employees following a partial government shutdown in July.

Average hourly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls declined by 3 cents in August to \$23.09. This decline followed an 11-cent gain in July. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have risen by 1.9 percent. From July 2010 to July 2011, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased by 3.6 percent.

Turning to measures from the survey of households, the unemployment rate remained at 9.1 percent in August, and has been at or near that level since April. The number of unemployed persons was little changed in August at 14 million.

The number of persons in the labor force rose over the month, while the labor force participation rate was little changed at 64.0 percent. The employment-population ratio, at 58.2 percent, also was little changed. Among the employed, those working part time for economic reasons rose by 430,000, to 8.8 million, in August.

In summary, both nonfarm employment and the unemployment rate were unchanged over the month. Employment in most major industries showed little change.