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Information Contact: Craig Shaul, (208) 332-3570 ext. 3201 or Bob Uhlenkott, (208) 332-3570 ext. 3217

Idaho Fastest Growing State in Over-the-Year Job Growth; December Unemployment Rate Unchanged at 3.9%

Idaho's 4.4 percent over-the-year growth of seasonally adjusted nonfarm jobs in December was the nation's fastest - the third consecutive month Idaho has held this distinction.

The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.9 percent in December - unchanged from November due to a labor force increase of 2,600 workers. December's labor force increase was the largest December increase since 2004 and pushed the state's total labor force above 806,000.

Idaho's labor force participation rate - the percentage of people 16 years and older with jobs or looking for work - increased to 64.3 percent after November's rate was revised down to 64.1 percent.

Idaho's nonfarm job growth of 4.4 percent was the largest gain in Idaho since 2005, with a seasonally adjusted increase of 29,100 jobs from December 2014 to December 2015. The greatest gains were in construction, manufacturing and real estate. Mining and logging, information, and state government were the only sectors to show declines.

Over the month, Idaho nonfarm payrolls grew by a seasonally adjusted 0.4 percent between November and December due to strong showings in manufacturing and wholesale trade.

With December's total employment at 774,543 and only 31,460 unemployed people looking for work, there were only 1.2 unemployed individuals per job listing, according to The Conference Board.

Nationally, the unemployment rate also remained unchanged at 5.0 percent - the third consecutive month the rate has held flat for the nation.

Annually, unemployment insurance benefit payments were down from December 2014 by 16 percent - from \$3.241 million a year ago to \$2.736 million in December 2015, while the number of weeks compensated dropped 20 percent from a weekly average of 11,471 to a weekly average of 9,159.

Twenty-seven Idaho counties reported unemployment rates above the state average with the highest of 8.5 percent in Shoshone County. The remaining 17 counties match or were below the state rate; the lowest rate of 2.6 percent was reported in Madison County. Among the metropolitan statistical areas, Coeur d'Alene had the highest rate with 4.8 percent and Idaho Falls the lowest with 3.2 percent.

For more information on Idaho's unemployment picture visit lmi.idaho.gov.

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Seasonally Adjusted Data	12/15	11/15	12/14
Civilian Labor Force	806,000	803,400	776,500
Unemployment	31,500	31,700	34,100
% Labor Force Unemployed	3.9	3.9	4.4
Total Employment	774,500	771,700	742,400

Unadjusted Forecast Data			
Civilian Labor Force	799,300	796,700	771,800
Unemployment	32,000	31,000	33,600
33,800	4.0	3.9	4.4
Total Employment	767,300	765,700	738,200

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Editors and news directors:

Idaho's 2015 average annual unemployment rate and labor force data will be released Friday, Feb. 26. Benchmarked nonfarm job data for 2015 will be released on Monday, March 14, concurrent with the January 2016 employment situation. February 2016's employment situation will be released on Friday, March 25.

Changes in the release dates for the monthly unemployment rate are due to a standard part of the unemployment rate and nonfarm job estimation process called "benchmark revisions" performed by the department and Bureau of Labor Statistics during January and February. Benchmark revisions represent a once-a-year re-anchoring of sample-based employment estimates to full employment counts. These counts are derived from unemployment insurance tax records nearly all employers are required to file with state workforce agencies like the Idaho Department of Labor. *Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics*

