Baton Rouge has remained bright spot in employment

Advocate staff report

Louisiana’s economy remained stagnant late last year, with few parts of the state able to shake off the oil and gas industry’s dole

The Baton Rouge metro area again was one of the few bright spots in the state’s economy, adding 7,200 nonfarm jobs between December 1998 and December 1999, preliminary Labor Department figures showed.

The metro area’s growth rate was 2.4 percent.

Louisiana added a total of 11,600 nonfarm jobs over the same period, a growth rate of less than 1 percent.

The oil patch’s decline showed in job losses in Lafayette, down 2,000 jobs or 1.2 percent; Houma, down 1,400 jobs, or 1.7 percent; and New Orleans, down 2,600 jobs, or 0.4 percent.

Louisiana’s oil and gas industry
lost 3,200 jobs in 1999.

The only other metro area where employment fell was Shreveport-Bossier City, which dropped 700 jobs, or 0.4 percent, between December 1998 and December 1999.

However, the Baton Rouge labor market continued to expand for all the reasons it has grown for so long.

Construction added 1,700 jobs and state, local and federal governments added 1,600 jobs.

Meanwhile, Louisiana registered its lackluster growth in a period of tremendous consumer confidence and a nationwide economic boom.

Louisiana has certain industries, such as oil and gas, that don’t reflect the nation’s booming economy, Richardson said. When oil and gas comes back, and it could catch up with the current high salaries, the state’s economic performance will improve.

The other metro areas that added jobs were Alexandria, up 300, or 0.5 percent; Lake Charles, up 400, or 0.5 percent; and Monroe, up 1,200, or 1.7 percent.

Meanwhile, the state’s unemployment rate dropped to 3.8 percent, compared to 4.9 percent a year earlier. The unemployment rate estimates the number of people who don’t have jobs but are actively seeking work.

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