Jobless situation improves in parish

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State Editor

BATON ROUGE — The unemployment situation in Lafayette Parish improved during March, figures released Monday show, paralleling a statewide improvement.

The Lafayette labor market's rate, which includes St. Martin Parish, dropped from 11.5 percent in February to 10.9. The statewide rate dropped from 12.2 to 11.7 percent.

Louisiana apparently will be second to West Virginia for the worst employment in the nation, followed by Alaska at 10.8 and Mississippi at 8.6. West Virginia's figures have not yet been released.

Nationwide, unemployment was 5.9 percent in March, making Louisiana almost twice the national rate.

The employment rate is expected to improve this month, according to Labor Secretary Phyllis Mouton, because of improvement in construction and increases in manufacturing.

Department of Labor figures show 1.68 million people were employed in the state and 222,300 were unemployed in March.

Oil and gas extraction in Louisiana was up 200 jobs in Louisiana in March and up 1,700 jobs from March 1987. Manufacturing increased 900 jobs in March and is up 7,600 jobs from a year ago.

West Carroll Parish registered the highest unemployment rate in the state with 28.5 percent and five parishes reported rates of 20 percent or more. Lincoln Parish had the lowest rate in the state with 6.0 percent unemployed.

In the Lafayette labor market area, employment was estimated at 82,200, a decrease of 100 from February but 1,400 above March 1987.

Employment in construction rose by 100 in March but is 100 below the count a year ago. Wholesale and retail trade dropped 100 jobs from February but government employment increased by the same number.

The improvement in the Lafayette unemployment rate was due largely to a decrease in the job market from 97,800 in February to 97,000 in March.

Unemployed workers in the parish were paid $795,841 in benefits for the month. In St. Martin, unemployment benefits totaled $248,220.

Unemployment rates in the state's major market areas are as follows:

- Alexandria — 10.7, down from 11.2
- Baton Rouge — 9.8, down from 10.4
- Houma-Thibodaux — 13.2, down from 13.9
- Lafayette — 10.9, down from 11.5
- Lake Charles — 12.9, down from 13.8
- Monroe — 11.2, down from 11.7
- New Orleans — 9.8, down from 10.0
- Shreveport — 11.3, down from 11.8