State jobless rate rises

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BATON ROUGE — Louisiana's unemployment rate has climbed again, assuring the state of the worst job situation in the nation.

Lafayette's rate in November remained stable at the October figure of 10.4 percent — slightly better than the state average.

Figures released by the Department of Labor Tuesday show Louisiana had 10.5 percent unemployment in November, up from 10.3 in October.

The national average for November was 5.6 percent, down from 5.7 percent in October.

The state rate has shown some improvement from a year ago, when Louisiana had 13.4 percent unemployment — more than twice the national rate of 6.6 percent.

Statewide, 1.76 million are employed and 207,100 are jobless. The worst situation is in Assumption Parish, where 22.8 percent of the workers are without jobs and the best continues to be in Lincoln Parish where only 5.3 percent are unemployed.

Secretary of Labor Gayle Trul is predicting a lower unemployment rate when December figures are tallied due to seasonal retail trade employment. However, construction employment is expected to fall because of adverse weather conditions.

The number of Louisiana oil and gas jobs remained steady at 57,600 jobs — up 1,900 from a year ago. Manufacturing employment continues to increase — up 500 jobs from October and up 4,800 jobs from November 1986.

In the Lafayette area, 83,800 people were employed in non-agricultural jobs in November. That's an increase of 100 from October but a decrease of 1,400 from last year. Most of the job losses are due to the drop in the oil and gas business.

Of the 101,900 total work force (including agriculture), 91,300 are working.

Unemployment is expected to stay the same for December but probably will increase after the holidays.

Wholesale and retail trade are the largest employers in the Lafayette area, followed by service industries, government and mining (which includes oil and gas).

In surrounding parishes, unemployment is as follows:
- Acadia — 13.8, down from 14.2;
- Iberia — 15.1, down from 15.4;
- St. Martin — (included in Lafayette);
- St. Landry — 15.6, up from 15.2;
- Vermilion — 15.7, up from 15.0.

Unemployment benefits paid in November to recipients in Lafayette and surrounding parishes were:
- Lafayette $754,361;
- Acadia $274,924;
- Iberia $306,329;
- St. Landry $420,906;
- St. Martin $200,208; and Vermilion $295,171.

Statewide, 1.5 million people are employed in non-agricultural jobs. That's an increase of 600 jobs over October but 2,900 fewer than a year ago. The unemployment rate would have been higher if the workforce had not shrunk.

Total benefits paid statewide totalled $19.6 million. Another $1 million was paid to residents of other states filing claims against Louisiana employers.

Assumption was the only parish with unemployment of more than 20 percent. The next highest were West Carroll (18.8) and Catahoula (17.7).

Joining Lincoln with less than 10 percent unemployment were West Feliciana (7.9), Jackson (8.1), Winn (8.5), Vernon (8.6), Sabine (8.7), Rapides (8.9), East Baton Rouge (8.9), Natchitoches (9.1), Ouachita (9.2), Orleans (9.2), and LaSalle (9.8).

Unemployment in major labor market areas was as follows:
- Alexandria — 8.9 percent, up from 8.4;
- Baton Rouge — 8.9, up from 8.7;
- Houma-Thibodaux — 12.3, up from 12.1;
- Lafayette — 10.4, same as October;
- Lake Charles — 12.1, up from 11.9
- Monroe — 9.2, up from 8.7;
- New Orleans — 9.2, same as October;
- Shreveport — 10.1, up from 9.7.