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Thursday, June 15, 2017

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BLS: State Unemployment Rate Drops to Near-Historic Low of 3.1%

MADISON – The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) today released the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) revisions for April and preliminary estimates for May covering employment and job statistics for the state of Wisconsin. In brief, the seasonally adjusted estimates show:

Place of residence data: A preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 3.1 percent in May 2017, down 0.1 percent from April and at its lowest rate since October 1999. The rate remains lower than the national unemployment rate, which was 4.3 percent in May 2017. Additionally:

- The rate of 3.1 percent is the second-lowest rate on record for Wisconsin (the lowest rate was 3.0 percent in May-July 1999).
- Wisconsin's January (3.9 percent) to May (3.1 percent) unemployment rate decline of 0.8 percentage points in 2017 is the steepest January-May decline since 1983.
- Wisconsin's labor force participation rate increased by 0.2 percentage points to 68.8 percent, while the U.S. labor force participation rate decreased to 62.7 percent in May.
- Both total labor force and employment in Wisconsin remained at all-time highs in May, while the number of unemployed individuals reached its lowest point since February 2000.

Place of work data: Based on preliminary data, the state added a significant 40,400 total non-farm jobs and a significant 30,700 private-sector jobs from May 2016 to May 2017, with April-to-May 2017 changes within the margin of error for total nonfarm, private, manufacturing and government jobs.

DWD Secretary Ray Allen issued the following statement: "With more people working in Wisconsin than ever in state history and a state unemployment rate hovering near the lowest on record, we are taking the necessary steps to continue building our best-in-class workforce to meet the labor market needs of the modern economy. From Governor Walker's signature Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training program to our century-old Registered Apprenticeship, Wisconsin is regarded as a national leader in proven programs that address the skills gap."

The BLS uses three data sets to measure employment and unemployment:

- **Current Employment Statistics (CES):** compiled from a monthly survey sent to about 5,500 employers (3.5 percent of Wisconsin employers). CES data has been shown to be volatile and subject to revision.
- **Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS):** compiled from a monthly survey of 985 households and unemployment insurance claims. Measures the labor force, employment, unemployment, and the unemployment rate.
- **Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW):** compiled quarterly based on Unemployment Insurance records from some 96% of Wisconsin business establishments. Considered by most economists to be the most accurate measure of jobs, the QCEW includes data from almost all employers.

Other indicators of the state of Wisconsin's economy include:

- Initial UI claims ended 2016 at their lowest level in the last 30 years. Year 2017 initial UI claims are running at the lowest in at least the past 30 years.
- Continuing unemployment claims ended 2016 at their lowest level since 1973. Continuing unemployment claims in Wisconsin are running at the lowest in at least the past 30 years.

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Wisconsin Employment and Unemployment Report
APRIL – MAY 2017

1. REVISIONS TO ESTIMATES FROM APRIL 2017

Place of Residence Data	Seasonally Adjusted			Not Seasonally Adjusted		
	Prelim	Revised	Change	Prelim	Revised	Change
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE	3,147,300	3,147,100	-200	3,121,800	3,121,300	-500
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE	68.6%	68.6%	0.0%	68.1%	68.1%	0.0%
EMPLOYMENT (1)	3,046,900	3,046,600	-300	3,028,500	3,027,800	-700
UNEMPLOYMENT	100,500	100,500	0	93,300	93,500	200
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	3.2%	3.2%	0.0%	3.0%	3.0%	0.0%
U.S. Unemployment Rate	4.4%	4.4%	0.0%	4.1%	4.1%	0.0%
Place of Work Data						
NONFARM WAGE & SALARY	2,961,900	2,960,200	-1,700	2,941,500	2,939,800	-1,700
TOTAL PRIVATE	2,543,100	2,541,600	-1,500	2,510,000	2,508,500	-1,500
GOODS PRODUCING	592,500	591,500	-1,000	583,200	582,200	-1,000
NATURAL RESOURCES & MINING	3,900	3,900	0	3,800	3,800	0
CONSTRUCTION	115,600	115,500	-100	110,300	110,200	-100
MANUFACTURING	473,000	472,100	-900	469,100	468,200	-900
Durable Goods	283,800	283,600	-200	282,200	282,000	-200
Nondurable Goods	189,200	188,500	-700	186,900	186,200	-700
SERVICE PROVIDING	2,369,400	2,368,700	-700	2,358,300	2,357,600	-700
PRIVATE SERVICE PROVIDING	1,950,600	1,950,100	-500	1,926,800	1,926,300	-500
TRADE	437,600	436,700	-900	430,200	429,300	-900
TRANS., WAREHOUSING, & UTILITIES	106,200	106,500	300	104,900	105,200	300
INFORMATION	47,900	47,900	0	46,900	46,900	0
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	153,800	153,700	-100	152,900	152,800	-100
PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SERVICES	324,700	324,600	-100	320,600	320,500	-100
EDUCATIONAL & HEALTH SERVICES	450,000	450,200	200	452,000	452,200	200
LEISURE & HOSPITALITY	277,400	277,600	200	266,800	267,000	200
OTHER SERVICES, except Public Admin.	153,000	152,900	-100	152,500	152,400	-100
GOVERNMENT	418,800	418,600	-200	431,500	431,300	-200
Federal Government	29,000	29,000	0	29,000	29,000	0
State Government	99,100	99,100	0	105,600	105,600	0
Local Government	290,700	290,500	-200	296,900	296,700	-200

2. MONTHLY ESTIMATES FOR MAY 2017

Place of Residence Data	May-17 (P)	Apr-17 (R)	Net Change	May-17 (P)	Apr-17 (R)	Net Change
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE	3,155,300	3,147,100	8,200	3,136,700	3,121,300	15,400
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE	68.8%	68.6%	0.2%	68.4%	68.1%	0.3%
EMPLOYMENT (1)	3,059,000	3,046,600	12,400	3,049,000	3,027,800	21,200
UNEMPLOYMENT	96,300	100,500	-4,200	87,700	93,500	-5,800
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	3.1%	3.2%	-0.1%	2.8%	3.0%	-0.2%
U.S. Unemployment Rate	4.3%	4.4%	-0.1%	4.1%	4.1%	0.0%
Place of Work Data						
NONFARM WAGE & SALARY	2,957,100	2,960,200	-3,100	2,969,500	2,939,800	29,700
TOTAL PRIVATE	2,539,900	2,541,600	-1,700	2,543,800	2,508,500	35,300
GOODS PRODUCING	589,800	591,500	-1,700	590,700	582,200	8,500
NATURAL RESOURCES & MINING	4,000	3,900	100	4,100	3,800	300
CONSTRUCTION	114,000	115,500	-1,500	116,500	110,200	6,300
MANUFACTURING	471,800	472,100	-300	470,100	468,200	1,900
Durable Goods	283,200	283,600	-400	283,900	282,000	1,900
Nondurable Goods	188,600	188,500	100	186,200	186,200	0
SERVICE PROVIDING	2,367,300	2,368,700	-1,400	2,378,800	2,357,600	21,200
PRIVATE SERVICE PROVIDING	1,950,100	1,950,100	0	1,953,100	1,926,300	26,800
TRADE	437,800	436,700	1,100	434,100	429,300	4,800
TRANS., WAREHOUSING, & UTILITIES	107,000	106,500	500	107,300	105,200	2,100
INFORMATION	46,900	47,900	-1,000	46,600	46,900	-300
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	152,700	153,700	-1,000	152,500	152,800	-300
PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SERVICES	328,300	324,600	3,700	326,300	320,500	5,800
EDUCATIONAL & HEALTH SERVICES	447,900	450,200	-2,300	448,700	452,200	-3,500
LEISURE & HOSPITALITY	279,300	277,600	1,700	286,900	267,000	19,900
OTHER SERVICES, except Public Admin.	150,200	152,900	-2,700	150,700	152,400	-1,700
GOVERNMENT	417,200	418,600	-1,400	425,700	431,300	-5,600
Federal Government	29,200	29,000	200	29,100	29,000	100
State Government	100,600	99,100	1,500	101,600	105,600	-4,000
Local Government	287,400	290,500	-3,100	295,000	296,700	-1,700

*Differences in total may occur as a result of rounding. (1) Includes Labor Market Disputes (P) = Prelim; (R) = Revised Blue changes are outside margin of error.
Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics and Current Employment Statistics programs, Bureau of Workforce Information and Technical Support.

Cautionary note to users: Revised methodological procedures mandated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) force individual state estimates of employment into closer alignment with the national estimate. This change results in larger month-to-month employment change for the states and the information reported by DWD.

3. HISTORY OF REVISIONS OF ESTIMATES FROM PLACE OF WORK SURVEY

Month-Over-Month Changes	TNF			Private		
	Prelim	Revised	Change	Prelim	Revised	Change
January 2017	+200	+5,400	+5,200	+5,800	+10,400	+4,600
February 2017	+11,100	+11,100	+0	+7,600	+8,300	+700
March 2017	(2,700)	(3,700)	(1,000)	+500	+800	+300
April 2017	+14,800	+13,100	(1,700)	+7,500	+6,000	(1,500)
May 2017						
June 2017						
July 2017						
August 2017						
September 2017						
October 2017						
November 2017						
December 2017						

Note: Prelim = original month-over-month change. Revised = updated month-over-month change. The "Change" column represents the difference between the prelim month-over-month change and the revised month-over-month change.

4. LATEST QUARTERLY DATA: CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES													
	2015 Employment*			2016 Employment*			Dec-Dec Change		Total Wages		Change		
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec	Number	Percent	Q4:2015*	Q4:2016*	Number	Percent	
TOTAL	2,831,832	2,827,418	2,826,996	2,854,459	2,861,006	2,842,416	15,420	0.5%	\$34,691,105	\$34,248,109	-\$442,996	-1.3%	
Total Private	2,445,394	2,441,064	2,439,215	2,465,950	2,460,995	2,450,763	11,548	0.5%	\$30,032,416	\$29,844,819	-\$187,597	-0.6%	
Natural Resources & Mining	33,324	31,150	29,420	33,834	31,899	30,010	590	2.0%	\$312,429	\$313,473	\$1,044	0.3%	
Construction	116,514	113,578	108,503	118,639	116,468	109,169	666	0.6%	\$1,801,541	\$1,832,634	\$31,093	1.7%	
Manufacturing	465,211	464,789	465,147	461,212	460,517	461,363	-3,784	-0.8%	\$7,009,607	\$6,638,167	-\$371,440	-5.3%	
Trade, Transportation, Utilities (Total)	537,169	546,029	548,667	539,441	548,370	551,536	2,869	0.5%	\$5,598,127	\$5,462,064	-\$136,063	-2.4%	
Information	49,641	49,842	49,701	48,611	48,799	48,846	-855	-1.7%	\$951,861	\$913,957	-\$37,904	-4.0%	
Financial Activities	147,046	146,849	147,507	147,786	147,671	148,052	545	0.4%	\$2,441,479	\$2,487,658	\$46,179	1.9%	
Professional & Business Services	319,117	317,889	317,757	325,509	324,922	322,070	4,313	1.4%	\$4,903,061	\$5,080,191	\$177,130	3.6%	
Education & Health Services	417,078	418,469	420,856	424,997	425,911	426,149	5,293	1.3%	\$5,180,009	\$5,211,567	\$31,558	0.6%	
Leisure & Hospitality	272,122	264,575	262,611	275,314	266,232	263,074	463	0.2%	\$1,154,121	\$1,179,722	\$25,601	2.2%	
Other Services	83,491	83,099	84,305	84,051	83,569	84,021	-284	-0.3%	\$614,569	\$616,194	\$1,625	0.3%	
Unclassified	4,681	4,795	4,741	6,556	6,637	6,473	1,732	36.5%	\$65,612	\$109,193	\$43,581	66.4%	
Total Government	386,438	386,354	387,781	388,498	400,009	391,653	3,872	1.0%	\$4,658,689	\$4,403,290	-\$255,399	-5.5%	
Total wages are in thousands (Totals may not equal due to rounding)													

*Data as published by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
†Data as will be published at worknet.wisconsin.gov.
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages counts are published 6 months after the quarter they describe.
Data from the latest published quarter and a year prior are included here.