



Alabama Department of Industrial Relations

News Release

For Immediate Release: March 30, 2012

Alabama's February Unemployment Rate Drops to 7.6% *Recent Drops in Unemployment Affect Extended Benefit Duration*

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Department of Industrial Relations Director Tom Surtees announced today that Alabama's February unemployment rate dropped to 7.6%, down from 7.8% in January. February's rate represents 162,939 unemployed persons, down from 167,588 last month and 204,496 in February 2011.

Wage and salary employment increased over the month by 13,700. Increases were realized in the leisure and hospitality industry, the manufacturing industry, the construction industry, and the professional and business services industry.

"Again, we are seeing positive trends in our unemployment rate," said Surtees. "We continue to see our rate drop, and we are realizing job gains in various industries. Also this month, our state's online jobs database, Joblink Alabama, saw a record breaking 11,000 jobs posted – the most jobs posted in the site's seven year history."

Counties with the lowest unemployment rates were: Shelby County at 5.6%, Lee County at 6.4%, and Coffee County at 6.6%. Counties with the highest unemployment rates were: Wilcox County at 16.9%, Lowndes County at 16.0%, and Dallas County at 14.2%.

Due to the unemployment rate's steady decline over the past several months, claimants who are currently receiving extended unemployment compensation (UC) benefits will see significant changes in the number of weeks they are eligible to receive benefits.

Alabamians have been eligible to receive **UP TO 99** weeks of benefits, through a combination of state funded and federally funded programs. Below is a chart illustrating how benefits have been paid in Alabama:

Schedule of Benefits Payable

1. Regular UC	26 weeks
2. Tier 1	20 weeks
3. Tier 2	14 weeks
3. Tier 3	13 weeks
4. Tier 4	6 weeks
5. HEB	20 weeks

Alabama is responsible for funding the first 26 weeks of benefits, known as Regular UC. The federal government funds the other tiers, which were enacted in the years following the onset of the recession.

THE FOLLOWING CHANGES ARE EFFECTIVE NOW:

Alabama is no longer eligible for ANY benefits under Tier 4 (although some claimants will continue to remain eligible to file for these payments until April 7, 2012).

Alabama has also “triggered off” of the 20 week High Extended Benefits (HEB) program, effective immediately. This program is designed to provide additional benefits during times of exceptionally high unemployment. In order to remain “triggered on” the HEB program, a state must have a three month average unemployment rate of above 8.0% AND exceed 110 percent of the average total unemployment rate for either or both of the corresponding three-month periods in the three preceding calendar years. After the “trigger off” date of the HEB program, claimants will continue to receive benefits for three weeks following the trigger off date. The last week payable for this tier of benefits is April 21, 2012. There is no phase out for this program.

The new maximum number of weeks of eligibility in Alabama is now 73 weeks.

It is important to note that **THERE ARE NO ADDITIONAL WEEKS INCLUDED** in this legislation.

Claimants who will lose benefit weeks will be notified by the Department of Industrial Relations.

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Members of the media needing more information should contact Public Information Officer Tara Hutchison at (334) 242-8616.