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June 22, 2019, Labor Market Report for May 2019

The California Labor Market Information Division released its June 2019 report Friday, showing an improvement in our unemployment rate, moving from 3.2% in May to a stunning low 3.0% in May. After a couple of months of near historic lows for Ventura County, 3.0% is now the mark to beat. We are now starting to put a bit of separation between us and the state and the nation, which are at an unadjusted 3.5% and 3.4%, respectively. For the current data, go to [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/vent\\$pds.pdf](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/vent$pds.pdf).

Industry Employment & Labor Force: Continuing our usual story, we are disappointed that our improvement in the unemployment rate had nothing to do with more job creation. In fact, the data shows we lost 200 jobs each in the Farm and Nonfarm sectors, with the unemployment rate improving only because we had 1,800 workers drop out of the labor force. Now at 423,200, our labor force is down 3,300 workers from one year ago and down 8,900 workers on the decade. For more commentary on the causes of the decline in labor force, see our prior month's report.

If there's any good news in the industry data, it's that we had few significant losses by sector. On the upside, Construction and Manufacturing both gained jobs, at 200 and 100, respectively. On a percentage basis, Construction is our strongest sector, up a very strong 1,000 jobs since May 2018, for a 6% gain. On the downside, we lost 300 jobs in Trade, Transportation and Utilities, for a decline of 700 year-over-year. Professional and Business Services also dropped 200 jobs, for a year-over-year decline by 400. Health Services continued its volatile movement, dropping 500 jobs in May, but still up 1,300 year-over-year. On the whole, our private sector job growth rate is anemic, annualized at a bit over six tenths of one percent. There's a lot to like about our historic lows in unemployment, but that measure is not an indication of a broadly shared prosperity. At the least, we should know that a decreasing share of our population is securing economic gain through employment.

Unemployment Rate in the Statewide Context: Even while Ventura County is hitting historic lows in unemployment rate, we rank only 15th among California's 58 counties, and actually fell back a slot in May, from 14th in April. Looking at our surrounding counties, Santa Barbara continued its positive trend, hopping ahead of us at 2.9% and 13th. San Luis Obispo also improved, from 2.6% in April to 2.4% in May, tied with Orange County in the 7th slot statewide. Kern County fell back two spots, to 54th, but improved its unemployment rate from 8.4% in April to 7.2% in May. Los Angeles fell back

from 26th to 29th, but improved its unemployment rate from 4.0% to 3.9%. For a familiar story, the Bay Area continues to dominate the top slots, with eight of California's top ten counties, led by San Mateo at 1.7%, Marin and San Francisco at 1.9%, Santa Clara at 2.1% and Napa and Sonoma both at 2.3%. Orange and San Luis Obispo are tied for 7th at 2.4%. Rounding out the top ten are Alameda and Contra Costa, at 2.5% and 2.6%, respectively. California's overall improvement in its unemployment rate this month had contributors at the bottom end too, with several Central Valley counties dropping their unemployment rates by as much as two points, with at least a share of that attributable to seasonal change.

This month's detail on unemployment rates statewide can be viewed at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/1905pcou.pdf or go to www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/lf_geomaps_color.pdf for the mapping tool.

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