

## OREGON JOBLESS RATE SITS AT 9.6 PERCENT



As the United States economy continues to struggle, individual states are also dealing with unemployed citizens, and the state of Oregon has not seen its unemployment rate decline in quite some time. The unemployment rate for the state of Oregon sits at 9.6 percent, which is the same as the month of August, as defined by the state's Employment Department. The Oregon unemployment rate has been sitting below 10 percent for six consecutive months and is a half point higher than the national average of 9.1 percent, which has been holding steady for three consecutive months. After a gain of 1,200 non-farm jobs in August, the state lost 600 of those jobs in September. Those numbers are typically revised to include seasonal factors. The total non-farm employment number of \$1.6 million in September shows that Oregon's employment remains flat, with no job gains, and very little job loss. Since September of 2010, the state government has lost 7,900 jobs, which was offset by a gain of 8,000 jobs in two private sectors. Those two private sectors included education and health services and leisure and hospitality. In the month of September, the following industries lost jobs in the state of Oregon:

- trade, transportation and utilities industries lost 1,700 jobs
- professional and business services, which includes temp firms, lost 1,000

The industry of professional and business services has been adding jobs for close to two years according to the Employment Department of Oregon. That group of businesses is still down 14,400 jobs since April of 2008, which was the peak for the industry in Oregon. Despite the unemployment numbers for Oregon, it is eighth in the country for solar industry jobs. The top ten list for solar industry jobs is below:

1. California - 25,575 solar jobs
2. Colorado - 6,186
3. Arizona - 4,786
4. Pennsylvania - 4,703
5. New York - 4,279
6. Florida - 4,224
7. Texas - 3,346
8. Oregon - 3,346
9. New Jersey - 2,871
10. Massachusetts - 2,395

Oregon employs more than 3,300 workers in the solar industry, which is much higher than most experts estimated in the previous year. When the employment census was released last year, there were just over 800 solar jobs in the state, and experts estimated that there would be an increase in jobs of 26 percent to just over 1,100 jobs. Instead, the number of jobs increased 284 percent to the current number of 3,346 jobs across the state's 545 companies. "I'm afraid this will continue at least through the middle of next year," Wells Fargo economist Mark Vitner said. "And folks in the public sector are less prepared to be laid off, so they may be unemployed for a long time." David Cooke, an Employment Department economist had the following to say: "Over the last three recessions in Oregon, government employment lagged the private-sector trend by about 18 months." Gov. John Kitzhaber has begun to target the private sector for job growth. "This is going to have to be a private-sector recovery," Kitzhaber said Tuesday after seeing September's numbers. "The public sector can't recover until the private sector recovers."