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Statement of

John M. Galvin
Acting Commissioner
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Friday, May 4, 2012

Nonfarm payroll employment rose by 115,000 in April, and the unemployment rate was little changed at 8.1 percent. The April job gain followed an increase of 154,000 in March. For December through February, employment growth averaged 252,000 per month. In April, employment rose in professional and business services, retail trade, and health care but declined in transportation and warehousing.

Professional and business services added 62,000 jobs over the month. Employment rose in architectural and engineering services and in computer systems design. Temporary help services employment edged up over the month.

Retail trade added 29,000 jobs in April. Employment rose in general merchandise stores but has shown no definitive trend in recent months. Building material and garden supply stores continued to add jobs over the month.

Health care employment rose by 19,000 in April, led by gains in ambulatory health care services, which includes home health care services and doctors' offices. Health care had added an average of 28,000 jobs per month over the prior 12 months.

In April, employment continued to trend up in food services and drinking places (+20,000). The industry has added 576,000 jobs since a recent employment low point in February 2010.

Employment in manufacturing continued to grow (+16,000) in April. Fabricated metal products and machinery continued to add jobs. Manufacturing employment has risen by 489,000 since a recent low in January 2010, with the growth largely occurring in durable goods industries.

Employment decreased by 17,000 in transportation and warehousing in April, with losses in transit and ground passenger transportation and in couriers and messengers.

Average hourly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls increased by 1 cent in April to $23.38. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have risen by 1.8 percent. From March 2011 to March 2012, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased by 2.6 percent.

Turning now to our survey of households, both the unemployment rate, at 8.1 percent, and the number of unemployed persons, at 12.5 million, were little changed in April. Among

the unemployed, 41.3 percent had been looking for work for 27 weeks or more.

The labor force participation rate--the share of the population that was working or looking for work--declined to 63.6 percent in April. The employment-population ratio, at 58.4 percent, changed little.

In summary, nonfarm payroll employment grew by 115,000 in April, and the unemployment rate was little changed at 8.1 percent.