



FOR RELEASE
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**Rhode Island's Unemployment Rate Shows Little Change in December
 The Number of Jobs Increases**

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training Director Adelita S. Orefice announced today that Rhode Island's

	<u>Dec. 04</u>	<u>Nov. 04</u>	<u>Dec. 03</u>
Rhode Island	4.6%	4.5%	5.1%*
United States	5.4%	5.4%	5.7%
* Revised			

seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December was 4.6 percent, up 0.1 of a percentage point from November's revised estimate of 4.5 percent. The unemployment rate has remained relatively stable for the past three months. The number of unemployed Rhode Island residents edged up by 800 in December to 26,000. A year ago, the unemployment rate was 5.1 percent, and the number of unemployed stood at

29,300. Nationally, the unemployment rate held steady at 5.4 percent in December. The national unemployment rate has been either 5.4 or 5.5 percent in each month since July. Rhode Island's unemployment rate remained below the national average for the fourth straight month.

"The year ended on a positive note as the number of jobs in the state increased by 1,100 in December and our unemployment rate remained below the national average for the fourth straight month," said Director Orefice. "We are hopeful that this trend will continue in 2005."

Rhode Island Job Highlights

Rhode Island businesses added 1,100 jobs last month, bringing the December job count to 489,800 (seasonally adjusted). Over-the-month employment gains in Professional & Business Services (+800); Leisure & Hospitality (+400); Trade, Transportation & Utilities (+300); and Construction (+100) offset job losses reported in Government (-600) and Manufacturing (-200).

The more detailed unadjusted estimates, which traditionally report a small increase from November to December, were up by 200 (+0.04%) jobs over the month. The December job count stood at 496,000 (unadjusted), the highest December job count on record. The largest monthly gains were reported in Retail Trade (+1,000) and Professional & Business Services (+400), which combined to offset seasonal job losses in Construction (-500); Government (-500); and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (-300).

Seasonal hiring in Retail Trade resulted in an increase of 1,000 jobs, on par with the ten-year November to December average. The gain of 400 jobs in Professional & Business Services is partially attributable to short term hiring for the holiday season. Government reported a decrease of 500 employees this month, resulting from the loss of election workers hired for the November election and a slight decrease in public school employment.

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Over the year, employment was up 4,100 (+0.8%) from the 491,900 jobs (unadjusted) reported in December 2003. The largest gains were noted in Accommodation & Food Services (+1,500); Educational Services (+1,100); Health Care & Social Assistance (+1,100); Construction (+800) and Retail Trade (+700). The largest private sector employment loss occurred in Manufacturing (-900). Government employment declined by 600 as a result of job losses in the Federal (-500) and State (-100) segments. Employment in Local Government remained even over the year.

Hours and Earnings

The \$13.11 average hourly wage earned by the Manufacturing sector's production workers in December 2004 represented a yearly gain of fourteen cents and a monthly gain of two cents per hour. In December 2004, Manufacturing employees worked an average of 40.7 hours per week, an increase of 1.0 hour over the month, but a decline of 0.2 of an hour from last year.

***Note:** The unemployment figures are based largely on a survey of households in Rhode Island and measure the unemployment status of people who live in the state.*

The employment figures in the "Rhode Island Job Highlights" section are derived from a survey of businesses in Rhode Island and measure the number of jobs in the state.

**Rhode Island Labor Market Information is available on our web site at www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi
The January labor force figures are scheduled to be released on Friday, February 25, 2005.**

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The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training offers a wide array of employment and training services to both the general public and to individuals with unusual barriers to employment. DLT is ready to assist any job seeker, whether the goal is a first job, a better job, or a career change. Rhode Island's work force is protected through the enforcement of labor laws, prevailing wage rates, and work place health and safety standards. Temporary income support is available to unemployed, sick, or injured workers and a comprehensive rehabilitation program is available to those injured on the job.

DLT is dedicated to the growth and competitiveness of Rhode Island industry, administering a variety of training grants, tax credits, and apprenticeship programs to help employers. Economic indicators and labor market information are available for long-range planning. The Agency engages in active outreach, helping large and small employers retain their best workers or retrain their existing work force. At no cost to the employer, DLT will also screen job applicants, post job vacancies, and help businesses institute cost-sharing programs that can avert layoffs.

For more information on the innovative programs and services available to all Rhode Islanders at the Department of Labor and Training, please call (401) 462-8000 or visit our web site at www.dlt.ri.gov.

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

TDD (401) 462-8006

