

Business

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BERKSHIRE ECONOMY

Jobless rate drops, but remains over 5%

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PITTSFIELD—After two months of increases, the Berkshire County unemployment rate dropped slightly in March, but remained over five percent as it has since the beginning of the year.

The local jobless rate fell to 5 percent last month from the 5.3 percent registered in February, according to figures released on Tuesday by the state Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. Berkshire unemployment had jumped more than a percentage point to 5 percent in January after having remained under that

barrier for 10 months. The state unemployment rate is 3.9 percent, while national unemployment is 4.5 percent.

Berkshire unemployment is also half a percentage point lower than the 5.5 percent registered in March 2016.

The Pittsfield labor market area added 400 jobs, an increase of 1 percent, between February and March, and has added 700 jobs — a 1.7 percent increase — over the last 12 months. The state increase over that same 12 month time span is 1.4 percent, while the month-to-month increase at the state level is 0.5 percent.

LABOR FORCE RISES

At 65,400 workers, the county's total labor force is

at its highest level since August. The total number of employed county residents rose by 445 to 62,154 in March, while the number of county residents receiving jobless benefits fell by 211 to 3,276. The number of county residents collecting jobless benefits has remained over the 3,000 mark since the beginning of the year.

The jobless rates in the Great Barrington, North Adams and Pittsfield labor market areas all dropped slightly in March, but are all more than half a percentage point lower than they were in March 2016. The jobless rates in the cities of North Adams and Pittsfield also fell in March, and are both

lower than they were a year ago. Unemployment in North Adams dropped half a percentage point in March to 6.2 percent. Unemployment in the town of Great Barrington remained at 4.5 percent in March.

There were 1,574 Berkshire job openings listed on JobQuest Tuesday, and 1,054 people registered.

The figures released on Tuesday are not seasonally adjusted which means they take into account seasonal construction jobs and positions in the travel and tourism industry.

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