

February Unemployment Rates Down Locally, Statewide Despite Ongoing Claim Surge Due To COVID-19 Pandemic

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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SPRINGFIELD - Although Illinois state unemployment claims began to surge to record numbers due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, overall unemployment rates,

both statewide and in the local area, fell during February in statistics released by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Illinois Department of Employment Security.

Preliminary statistics released by both agencies on Thursday showed that statewide, the unemployment rate stood at 3.5 percent, which was 1.2 percent less than the same month last year, with the Illinois side of St. Louis showing a 1.6 percent drop from last February, from 4.8 percent to 3.2 percent, one of the biggest falls in the state. Three areas --- Danville, Kankakee and Carbondale -- all had drops of 1.8 percent overall, while Springfield unemployment fell 1.7 percent from a year ago.

The 1.6 percent drop is the highest-ever fall ever recorded in Metro-East. Madison County saw unemployment drop from 4.5 percent in February a year ago to 3.0 percent in 2020, while St. Clair County fell from 5.1 percent to 3.4 percent. Calhoun County saw a drop from 5.7 percent to 3.8 percent, Jersey County's unemployment rate went from 5.5 percent to 3.7 percent, Couperin County had a fall of two percent, from 5.5 percent to 3.5 percent and Greene County fell from 5.2 percent to 3.4 percent.

In individual cities, Alton's rate went from 5.8 percent to 3.8 percent, Collinsville had a drop from 5.2 percent to 3.3 percent, East St. Louis had the biggest drop, from 7.8 percent to 4.6 percent, in Edwardsville, the unemployment rate fell from 3.5 percent to 2.1 percent and the rate in Granite City dropped from 5.1 percent to 3.3 percent.

The increase in claims due to the pandemic have reached record proportions, both statewide and nationwide, and workers who file for and are approved for unemployment benefits from the state of Illinois are also eligible for a \$600 per week payment for four months from the Federal government as a part of a COVID-19 economic stimulus bill signed last week by President Donald J. Trump. The March and April unemployment numbers will be drastically different because of the coronavirus.

The administration of Gov. J.B. Pritzker has committed itself to the welfare of working families across the state.

"This administration is fully committed to the health and safety of our workforce, and ensuring our workers can provide for their families during this challenging time," said Illinois Deputy Gov. Dan Hynes. "As we navigate this period of economic uncertainty, we will continue to champion policies that will lift up every Illinois resident, while making investments that will help to strengthen our economy."

All unemployment statistics have yet to be adjusted for seasonal work, and are not included in the reports.

The state labor force overall decreased to 340,359 from 345,604 last February. The total number of people unemployed was 10,771, a decrease from 16,539 in February, 2019.

Increases in the total number of workers employed were reported in the fields of Professional and Business services, Construction, Government and Natural Resources and Mining, while decreases were reported in Educational and Health services, Trade, Transportation and Utilities, Financial Activities, other services and Leisure and Hospitality.