



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March 31 Oregon Employment Department Media Statement

Economic Update

On Tuesday, March 29, the Employment Department released February jobs numbers and [unemployment rates](#) for Oregon's counties and metropolitan areas. February unemployment rates declined in 35 counties and stayed steady in Wheeler County. Klamath County had Oregon's highest unemployment rate, at 5.5%, in February. The lowest rates were in Benton and Wheeler counties at 3% each.

The Portland metropolitan statistical area added 6,100 jobs in February. The Portland metro area has regained 82% of the jobs lost in the pandemic recession, compared to 86% for Oregon overall. The Bend metro area added 200 jobs over the month and has more jobs now than before the recession. The Albany metro area has regained essentially all of its recession job losses.

Several rural counties have also fully recovered their recession job losses, and they now have more nonfarm payroll jobs than before the pandemic. These counties include Baker, Crook, Gilliam, Harney, Morrow, Wallowa, and Wheeler counties.



More employment numbers are available on the [current employment estimates](#) page of [QualityInfo.org](#), or in the latest regional [news releases](#).

U.S. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh praises the Oregon Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Program

U.S. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh attended a review of Oregon's Trade Act Program on Thursday, March 24. Secretary Walsh met with Acting Employment Department Director David Gerstenfeld and Shelly Forsberg, Oregon Trade Act Program manager, and other program staff.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to showcase our renowned Trade Act Program," said Gerstenfeld. "Oregon's program is recognized throughout the U.S. as one of the best programs in the country for its service delivery."

Forsberg explained how the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) program helps people who have lost jobs due to foreign competition, such as plants that closed after companies moved operations overseas. The program provides these workers with opportunities to obtain the skills, credentials, resources, and support necessary to obtain suitable employment.

Forsberg described innovative pilot programs that align with Secretary Walsh's vision for the Department of Labor, such as providing equitable technology access to underserved populations.

Trade Act employee Tim Eannarino shared his own success story of how the program impacted him personally. Eannarino was working for the Portland Greenbrier manufacturing facility as a training manager when he was laid off in 2019. Through the Trade Act Program, he earned a professional certification in talent management, which gave him the updated skills he needed for the Employment Department to hire him as a training specialist in 2020.



“The Trade Act program offered an amazing opportunity to update my education, including learning online presentation skills that were very helpful during COVID,” said Eannarino. “I’m excited to be a part of the Trade Act team and give back to my community by helping people who are in the same position I was.”

Federal funding for the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) is due to sunset by June 30, 2022. As the federal government decides whether to reauthorize funding, Secretary Walsh is visiting Oregon and other states to learn more about best practices and the role trade act programs play throughout the country.

Secretary Walsh recognized the program’s fine work. “You should wear the badge of Number 1 in the nation with honor; you deserve it and should be proud.”

Speaking on the importance of reauthorization, Secretary Walsh said “TAA has already been operating in a reversion status, which has meant that TAA is serving an estimated 48,000 fewer workers nationwide. If TAA is not reauthorized this summer, the program will be terminated, and all new services will halt to a stop. TAA is a vital service to workers across the country, and I truly believe no one wants to see the TAA Program expire, especially at this critical moment for our country and our workers.”

Learn more about [Oregon’s Trade Act Program](#) online.

Attached photo: left – Secretary Walsh; right – Trade Act Trainer Tim Eannarino and Trade Act Program Manager Shelly Forsberg

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