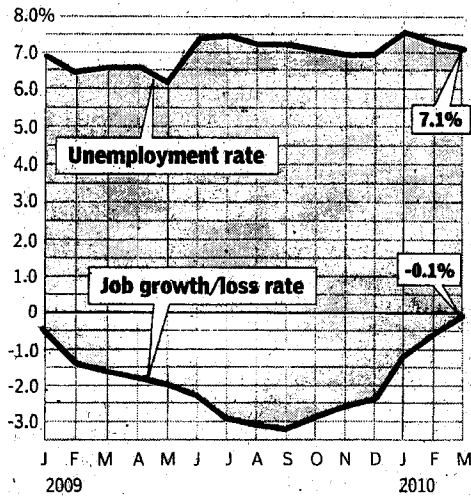


CENTRAL TEXAS ■ EMPLOYMENT

Austin jobs report

Austin area job losses narrowed in March, amid signs that the local job market is headed for a recovery.



Source: Texas Workforce Commission

AMERICAN STATESMAN

Job losses fall to almost zero in Austin area during March

Smallest drop in more than year could be sign of recovery

AMERICAN STATESMAN STAFF

Austin-area job losses were a slight 0.1 percent in March, signaling an approaching turnaround in the region's job market.

The Texas Workforce Commission reported Friday that Central Texas lost just 500 jobs when comparing March 2009 and last month. That's the smallest loss in more than a year, as employers begin to add jobs.

Economists have said that Austin will switch from net job losses to gains this year and that the city will be among the first to break out of the recession's job slump.

That will be helped by new employers in town, such as Facebook and Hanger Orthopedic Group, as well as ramped-up hiring by other local companies.

Other major Texas cities are still struggling with steep job losses. For example, Houston was down 2.4 percent in March from a year earlier, and San Antonio was down 1.8 percent, the Workforce Commission reported.

Central Texas unemployment was 7.1 percent last month, still up from 6.6 percent a year ago but down from 7.3 percent in February.

The job loss rate reflects the change in the total number of jobs in the region. Last month, that was 760,300.

The unemployment rate reflects the percentage of people in the work force who do not have a job. In March, that was 64,600 people out of a work force of 909,600. In part because of people continuing to move to Austin, the work force has grown from 873,000 in March 2009.

Statewide, unemployment remained at 8.2 percent for the fifth straight month. The state added 8,500 jobs between February and March.