

Large job gains drive unemployment rate down to 6.9 percent

By JUDY
LIN

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California enjoyed its largest monthly job gain in over a year with the addition of 67,300 new positions in January, driving the unemployment rate down to 6.9 percent, a state agency said Friday.

The figure marked a drop of two-tenths of a percentage point from the December rate, which was revised to 7.1 percent, the state Employment Development Department said.

California's unemployment rate has not been below 7 percent since May 2008. And the last time the state saw such a large monthly job gain was July 2013, department spokesman Kevin Callori said.

Meanwhile, the U.S. unemployment rate increased to 5.7 percent in January.

The total number of California nonfarm jobs reached 15.9 million in January, an increase of 67,300 over December.

Construction, professional and business services, educational and health services were among the eight categories that showed gains. The information sector posted the largest increase, adding 14,000 jobs, while manufacturing lost 4,200 jobs.

The state has added more than 1.8 million jobs since the economic recovery began in February 2010, the agency said.

The strong growth also translated into one of the best year-over-year gains since the turn of the century. Nonfarm payroll employment in California increased by 498,000 jobs from January 2014 to January 2015, up 3.2 percent.

That's the third largest year-over-year gain since September 2000, Callori said.

The number of unemployed Californians was 1.3 million in January, down 31,000 over the month. Unemployment claims fell to 397,142 in January, compared to 436,034 in December.