

The January Review

Our annual summaries of developments in State labor and unemployment insurance legislation are led off by John J. Fitzpatrick, Jr.'s analysis of a very extensive docket of State labor law enactments. Among the topics that were debated often in the statehouses, the most important were minimum wage, child labor, equal opportunity, and human trafficking.

Loryn Lancaster reports on changes in unemployment insurance law. There was a large number of technical amendments to the financing provisions of the unemployment insurance system and a Federal enactment provided funds to States affected by Hurricane Katrina and authorized other states to use their administrative funds to help those States process claims resulting from the storm's impact.

Jelle Visser's article on union membership in the United States and selected foreign economies finds that the share of workers covered by union bargaining agreements is much lower in the United States. In fact, the coverage rate in the United States (13.8 percent), is little more than half the rate in the next lowest country, Japan (23.5 percent).

Unemployment and work experience in 2004

The proportion of the civilian non-institutional population age 16 years old and older who worked at some time during the year was 67.6 percent in 2004, essentially unchanged from 2003. The proportions of men and women who worked at some time during the year, 74.1 and 61.5 percent, respectively, also were about unchanged from the prior year.

The number of persons who experienced some unemployment in 2004 fell by 1.4 million from 2003, to 15.1 million. At 9.7 percent in 2004, the "work-experience unemployment rate" was down by 1.0 percentage point from 2003. The rate is low by historical standards, but is above the series low of 8.6 percent reached in 2000. The rate for blacks in 2004, 14.4 percent, was higher than the rates for Hispanics or Latinos (10.9 percent), whites (9.0 percent), and Asians (8.0 percent). To learn more, see Work Experience of the Population in 2004, USDL news release 05-2353.

Relative pay in cities

The pay relative averaged across all occupations for workers in the San Francisco, California, metropolitan area was 117 in 2004, meaning that pay on average was 17 percent higher in that area than in the Nation as a whole. By contrast, the pay averaged across all occupations in the Brownsville, Texas, metropolitan area was 19 percent below the national average.

Pay relatives have been prepared for each of 9 major occupational groups within 78 Metropolitan Statistical Areas and have been averaged across all occupations for each area. Pay relatives averaged for workers in all occupations in San Francisco and Brownsville were, respectively, the highest and lowest among the 78 areas.

A pay relative is a calculation of pay—wages, salaries, commissions, and production bonuses—for a given metropolitan area, relative to the Nation as a whole. The calculation controls for differences among areas in occupational composition, establishment and occupational characteristics, and the fact that

data are collected for areas at different times during the year. Learn more in Occupational Pay Relatives, 2004, news release USDL 05-2382.

Shiskin Award nominations

Nominations are invited for the annual Julius Shiskin Memorial Award for Economic Statistics. The award, which was established to honor former BLS Commissioner Shiskin, is given in recognition of unusually original and important contributions in the development of economic statistics or in the use of statistics in interpreting the economy. Contributions are recognized for conducting statistical research, developing statistical tools, applying information technology techniques, using economic statistical programs, managing statistical programs, or developing public understanding of measurement issues.

Nominations for the 2006 award are now being accepted. Individuals or groups in the public or private sector from any country can be nominated. A nomination form and a list of all previous recipients are available on the ASA Web site at www.amstat.org/sections/business/econ/shiskin.html or by writing to the Julius Shiskin Award Committee, Attn: Monica Clark, American Statistical Association, 1429 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3402. Completed nominations must be received by April 1, 2006. □

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www.bls.gov/bls/newsrels.htm