

UNITED STATES: The Candidates on the Labor Market

Editor's note: In advance of the presidential election, we want to review the platforms of the two major candidates on jobs and job creation. The following is information taken directly from the campaigns' position papers.



From Sen. Barack Obama's Position Paper:

Barack Obama will create 5 million new green jobs by establishing an Advanced Manufacturing Fund to identify and invest in the most compelling advanced manufacturing strategies. He

will invest in a clean energy economy and create new job training programs for clean technologies.

He will create new jobs through national infrastructure investment by rebuilding the United States' national transportation infrastructure—including its highways, bridges, roads, ports, air and train systems—to strengthen user safety, bolster America's long-term competitiveness and ensure the nation's economic growth.

Barack Obama will increase federal support for research, technology and innovation for companies and universities, so that America can lead the world in creating new advanced jobs and products. Barack Obama will invest in the sciences, make the research and development tax credit permanent, and employ next-generation broadband.

He will support small businesses and start-up companies by providing tax relief and creating a national network of public-private business incubators.

Barack Obama will strengthen the ability of workers to organize unions. He will fight for the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, ensure that his labor appointees support workers' rights, work to ban the permanent replacement of striking workers, and increase the minimum wage and index it to inflation to ensure it rises every year.

From Sen. John McCain's Position Paper:

Small businesses are the job engine of America, and John McCain will make it easier for them to grow and create more jobs.



John McCain's Lexington Project will address the rising costs of energy that are hurting small businesses. He has set the goal of building 45 new nuclear power plants by 2030. This will cut the cost of energy and create 700,000 jobs in construction, engineering, operation and maintenance.

John McCain will cut the corporate tax rate from 35 to 25 percent. A lower corporate tax rate is essential to keeping good jobs in the United States.

Export growth is the strongest part of our sluggish economy, and we should encourage the growth of even more jobs in this sector through more free trade agreements, which will give American firms greater access to foreign markets.

John McCain understands that globalization will not automatically benefit every American. We must prepare the next generation of workers by making American education worthy of the promises we make to our children and to ourselves.

John McCain will overhaul unemployment insurance and make it a program for retraining, relocating and assisting workers who have lost their jobs. The unemployment insurance system needs to be modernized to meet the goals of helping displaced workers find jobs, and moving people to the next opportunity.

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"If I look sector by sector, there still are strong points out there, but if you look at construction, at manufacturing, it really is a tough story. If you look by sector, you can find some bright spots; even if you look geographically you can find some bright spots. If you want to get involved in Alaska, now is the time! But overall, the economy really looks like it's taking a pretty good hit."

Michael Jalbert, President of MRINetwork

On WCBS (NYC) 880 Newsradio, responding to a U.S. unemployment rate of 6.1 percent, September 5, 2008

UNITED KINGDOM

No Nation Is an Island

Paying £1.25 for a liter of petrol might sound civilized, but when translated across the pond, paying \$10 a gallon makes even those well-numbed to high gas prices cringe. With the faltering U.S. dollar, rocketing gas prices, and exposure to the sub-prime crisis, the U.K. has not survived as unscathed as it has in past European recessions.

Sandra Hill, managing director of The Hill Group, an MRINetwork office in Manchester, England, says that mid-level management and executive hiring has remained steady, but hiring has weakened at the lower end. For companies that are hiring, the process is taking much longer. "Managers are becoming more careful, and they are double-checking with their bosses to ensure that the responsibility for hiring decisions is being shared."

The U.K. has one of the most service-focused workforces in the world—more than 80 percent—causing it to be sensitive to the effects of the global credit crunch. Many banks and insurers had large exposures to the U.S. credit market, though no U.K. firms, as of yet, have actually faced collapse like those in the U.S.

Despite the hit to the services sector, many pockets of strength remain. Aging nuclear plants and the government's distaste for

importing power from Eastern Europe are driving energy plant construction. The U.K.'s military involvement in the Middle East has increased defense spending, as older equipment has become worn out. This summer, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) signed a contract to buy two Nimitz class-sized aircraft carriers at a total cost of £3.9 billion from the U.K.-based BAE Systems. Aerospace also has been helped by participating in the manufacture of the Airbus A380, and will be aided further when the MoD replaces its aging Harrier Jet fleet at a total cost of approximately £10 billion.

As in many other parts of the world, U.K. employers are starting to feel an increasingly severe engineering talent pinch. "In 2006, we had 20,000 engineers graduate, which is very low if you think that in 2006, Japan had 100,000 and China had nearly 500,000," continues Hill. "Whilst in the past, so-called blue collar workers were coming to the U.K. to fill manual labor positions, U.K. employers will soon be forced to look internationally to fill more skilled posts too."

Though most sides agree the state of the economy is not entirely his fault, Prime Minister Gordon Brown has become a lightning rod for the U.K.'s woes. Labour Party officials say there won't be a leadership election despite the calls for it, as many in the party are voicing concerns of losing power in the parliamentary election, due in 2010, if Brown heads the ticket.

It used to be said that the sun never sets on The British Empire. And while the horizon still looks bright, a brief eclipse seems to have taken away some of the luster.

OREGON

Timber Falls; Other Sectors Lift Economy

When people picture Oregon, they envision burly men logging timber in thick-forested areas. The image isn't too far off. Until 15 years ago, Oregon was highly dependent on a lucrative timber industry. Today, however, Oregon has grown past its wooded days and has developed into a booming, diversified state known for more than its lumber.

"It's very difficult to pull someone out of Oregon," says Tim Mulvaney, president of United Human Capital Solutions, an MRINetwork office in Portland, OR. "Despite the national economic downturn, our home prices have stayed very strong, our population is continuing to soar and many industries new to the state have been growing enormously."

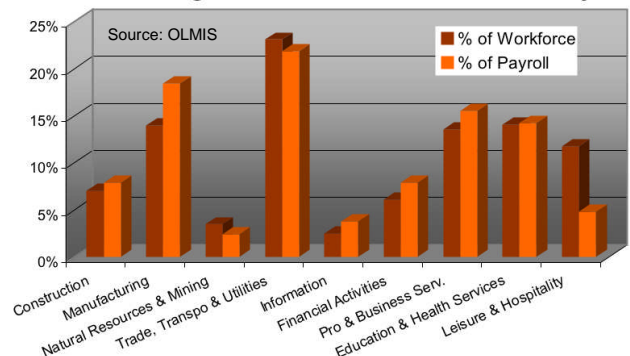
While Oregon is no doubt suffering from the current economy, the state is actually faring better than it has in the past. In June, for the first time in 12 years, Oregon's unemployment levels dipped below the national rate, according to the Oregon Labor Market Information System (OLMIS).

The strong numbers can, in part, be attributed to the state's emerging healthcare industry. Currently, nearly one in 10 working Oregonians works in healthcare, says Mulvaney.

"Healthcare is strong and growing an envied national reputation. People are moving to Oregon from all over the country to fill healthcare positions. In fact, half of our placements have been relocations," adds Mulvaney.

While healthcare is a dominant industry, it is not the only one contributing to Oregon's escalating allure. Portland is a major

Division of Oregon Private Sector Workforce and Payroll



player in the biotechnology sector, as well as being the home of major entities like Nike, Intel and a highly competitive university system.

"Small retailers and manufacturers have found enormous success in Oregon," says Mulvaney. "They are extremely active here, and many have been cited as being among the top 100 companies to work for in the country."

Although Oregon is no doubt on its way up, industries that were once the economic mainstay of the state are slowly becoming obsolete, shedding employees in their wake. In the last year, durable goods manufacturing has seen the most job losses, with significant cuts in computer and electronic product manufacturing, transportation equipment manufacturing and wood products, reports OLMIS.

Yet, Mulvaney sees the shifts as something to embrace.

"It's not the old days anymore," he says. "We are moving away from our outdated dependency on lumber, and into a prosperous high-tech labor market."