

Governor Quinn Announces Illinois' Unemployment Rate Drops to Near Six-Year Low

Written by Dave Blanchette
Friday, 15 August 2014 13:17

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Visits Chicago Manufacturer to Announce State's Unemployment Rate Dropped to 6.8 Percent in July with 11,200 Private Sector Jobs Added

CHICAGO – As Illinois' unemployment rate fell to its lowest point since August 2008, Governor Pat Quinn today visited Wheatland Tube, the largest pipe and conduit manufacturer in North America, to discuss the state's ongoing economic comeback. Illinois' unemployment rate dropped to 6.8 percent in July, its lowest level since August 2008. Wheatland Tube is among many Illinois businesses that are adding new jobs to the state's workforce and fueling the economic recovery. Today's event is part of the Governor's agenda to create jobs and drive Illinois' economy forward.

"Illinois' comeback is going strong and we've got more work to do," Governor Quinn said. "Illinois manufacturers like Wheatland are helping to drive our economy forward by creating good jobs and supporting local communities across the state. Today's news that unemployment has dropped to its lowest level in nearly six years is further proof that we are heading in the right direction."

Illinois' unemployment rate declined in July to 6.8 percent from June's 7.1 percent, according to data released earlier today by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Illinois Department of Employment Security. During July, 11,200 new private sector jobs were added, including 3,900 manufacturing jobs. The state's unemployment rate has fallen steadily since July 2013, when it stood at 9.2 percent, and has completed its steepest 12-month decline of 2.4 percentage points since August 1984. Since February 2010, Illinois has added 263,100 private sector jobs.

As part of his agenda to drive the state's economy forward, Governor Quinn has taken unprecedented steps to support Illinois' manufacturers, which supports jobs in service industries and sends Illinois products worldwide. His signature effort in the field of

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manufacturing was a \$16 million investment in the Digital Manufacturing and Design Innovation Institute on Chicago's Goose Island. The institute is a venture of UI Labs that will connect manufacturers to the latest tools and knowledge.

Since taking office in 2009, Governor Quinn has enacted worker's compensation reform and unemployment insurance reform to make Illinois a better place to do business. Other major fiscal reforms such as pension reform and Medicaid restructuring are restoring fiscal stability to Illinois. Today Governor Quinn is pushing a new tax cut for businesses that provide job training. Lowering cost to train workers will make it easier for businesses to create new jobs and will ensure workers have the skills to drive a 21st century economy.

Wheatland Tube, a division of JMC Steel Group, began processing steel in Pennsylvania in 1931. Its Chicago facility began operation in 1969. The manufacturer of standard steel pipe, fence framework, fire sprinkler pipe, electrical conduit and mechanical tube employs 211 people at its Western Ave. plant but expects that number to increase by 10 percent over the next 12 months. In addition, Wheatland hired 51 new employees in 2013. Illinois is also home to Atlas Tube, a division of JMC Steel Group and the JMC Steel Group headquarters in Chicago. JMC Steel employs 300 people at the two locations.

"We are excited to have several of our largest tubing facilities located in Chicago," Jim Hays, Wheatland President of Electrical, Fence and Mechanical Tube, said. "Our Illinois location is central to multiple modes of transportation that allows us to move material economically through America. With support from the state, we have hired a diverse labor pool with the skill sets required to support all levels of our organization."

Wheatland Tube has received approximately \$66,000 in Employer Training Investment Program (ETIP) funds that will help enhance the skills of its workforce. JMC received approximately \$200,000 in state job-training this year to conduct a second round of industrial maintenance and advanced electrical maintenance training. The advanced training has helped current employees to improve their skills in key electrical and mechanical areas.

For more information on doing business in Illinois, visit <http://illinois.gov/dceo> or [Illinois.gov/dceo](#).