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For Immediate Release: Wed., March 18, 2009
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South Dakota unemployment rate increases slightly

PIERRE, S.D. – The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports South Dakota's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.6 percent in February 2009 compared to the January 2009 rate of 4.4 percent.

According to BLS data, South Dakota's seasonally adjusted jobless rate has not been this high since November 1986.

Although South Dakota's unemployment rate continues to be well below the national rate of 8.1 percent, the increasing rate reflects the harsh effects of the recession, says State Labor Secretary Pam Roberts.

The unemployment rate represents the number of unemployed as a percent of the labor force. People are classified as unemployed if they do not have jobs, have actively looked for work in the prior four weeks and are currently available for work. People who were not working and were waiting to be recalled to jobs from which they were temporarily laid off are also included as unemployed.

The number of initial unemployment insurance claims in February was 2,826. This reflects a nearly 30 percent reduction compared to 4,022 claims in the previous month.

"It is good to see the number of unemployment claims go down from last month," says Secretary Roberts. "However, compared to last year, claims are still significantly higher."

The over-the-year comparison shows an increase of nearly 116 percent between the 2,826 initial claims in February 2009 and the February 2008 level of 1,311.

The not-seasonally adjusted level of nonfarm wage and salaried jobs in South Dakota held steady in February at 398,400 workers. The over-the-year comparison shows a loss of 2,700 jobs (or 0.7 percent) compared to the February 2008 level of 401,100 workers.

"Most of the over-the-year job losses were centered within the manufacturing, mining and construction, and professional and business services industry sectors," says Secretary Roberts.

Growth did occur in some industries, including education and health services (2,000 jobs).

An overview of the labor market, latest data releases and snapshot of South Dakota's economy are available through the Department of Labor's *e-Labor Bulletin*. The next release is March 27. To view or subscribe, visit www.sdjobs.org/lmic.