

Unemployment on the rise in virtually every US urban area

Hiram Lee
23 March 2010

A new report from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) sheds new light on the unemployment crisis facing hundreds of urban areas in the United States. According to the report, released March 19, the unemployment rates in a staggering *363 out of 372* metropolitan areas were higher in January than they were a year before.

Thirty-five metropolitan areas registered official jobless rates of 15 percent, placing them well above the official national unemployment rate, which stood at 10.6 percent in January, up from 8.5 percent one year earlier. At least 187 metropolitan areas reported unemployment rates of 10 percent or more in January.

Of the 35 areas with jobless rates of 15 percent, 15 were located in California, and 6 in Michigan (which has one-quarter of California's population). California was also home to the three metropolitan areas with the highest unemployment rates: El Centro, with 27.3 percent; Merced, with 21.7 percent; and Yuba City, with 20.8 percent.

The metropolitan area formed by Los Angeles, Long Beach and Santa Ana, California, lost 248,600 jobs last year, more than any other metro area. Other areas suffering large numbers of job losses included the New York City-Northern New Jersey-Long Island area, where 224,220 jobs were eliminated; Chicago-Joliet-Naperville in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin: 174,700 jobs lost; and San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont in California, with a loss of 103,100 jobs.

In the 49 metropolitan areas in the US that have a population of 1 million people or more, the area comprised of Detroit, Warren and Livonia, Michigan, and the area in California made up of Riverside, San Bernardino and Ontario have the highest unemployment rates, with 15.6 and 15 percent,

respectively. Within the Detroit-Warren-Livonia area, Detroit-Livonia-Dearborn suffers from an official jobless rate of 16.4 percent and Warren-Troy-Farmington Hills, 15 percent. The latter metropolitan division underwent one of the most severe over-the-year percentage decreases in employment, 4.9 percent.

Rockford, Illinois, struggling with the loss of construction and manufacturing jobs, saw the greatest increase in the unemployment rate of any metropolitan area, rising 5.8 percentage points in one year. The city currently has a jobless rate just under 20 percent.

To get a sense of the conditions and living standards facing those areas where the economic crisis has caused soaring levels of unemployment, and the devastating implications they hold for workers, one has only to look at the example of Michigan, which has the highest unemployment rate in the US.

In Detroit, devastated by the collapse of the auto industry, workers are faced with few job opportunities and the disintegration of the social institutions around which their communities and lives have been organized. Dozens of schools face closure in what amounts to an all-out assault on public education, while plans to open dozens of private and semi-private charter schools are currently underway. More than 100 public schools in all have been closed in Detroit since 2006.

Complementing the city's efforts to dismantle public education, the Detroit Medical Center, the state's largest hospital system that provides health care for a significant portion of the uninsured, is to be sold to the for-profit Vanguard Health Systems hospital chain, placing access to health care by the city's poor in still greater danger.

An article in the *Detroit Free Press* on Monday sums up what workers can expect from newly restructured communities organized for the benefit of profit

interests. The description has relevance for metro areas across the country: “Multi-community police and fire agencies, fewer city libraries and community centers, bare-bones local governments and maybe higher taxes.... It’s a scenario that experts across the region say is likely in the next decade as metro Detroit municipalities stare down declining property values and rising budget shortfalls.”



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact