

Austin job growth continues in September

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The Austin area continued to add jobs last month mostly in education as the school year began with a 2.3 percent growth rate compared with the same time last year.

The Texas Workforce Commission reported Friday that Central Texas gained 17,300 jobs from September 2009 to last month, for a total of 771,200 jobs.

That growth rate is the highest among major cities, according to Beverly Kerr , the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce's vice president for research.

Kerr, who compiles a ranking of the top 50 metro areas, said that Austin is ahead of Washington, D.C., which had a 2 percent job growth rate last month.

"We've been at the top for it feels like almost as long as I can remember with this recession," Kerr said.

Most of the growth stemmed from area schools and colleges adding staff for the school year, according to the Workforce Commission. Those new positions were part of the 4,000-job gain in the government sector between August and September.

There has also been strong year-over-year growth in leisure and hospitality. That sector has grown by 10,100 jobs since September 2009, as Austin continues to perform strongly in the hotel industry.

Roy Benear , senior vice president of the Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau, said it's "totally realistic" to see growth in that sector.

"Compared to other destinations in the industry, Austin and in general terms, Texas on the whole, most of the major destinations have all held up pretty well," he said.

During the past three years or so, the metro area has added 2,000 to 3,000 hotel rooms, he said. The W Austin Hotel has been hiring to fill 300 jobs, ahead of its Dec. 9 opening.

The Austin area's unemployment rate was 6.8 percent, down from 7.2 percent one year ago.

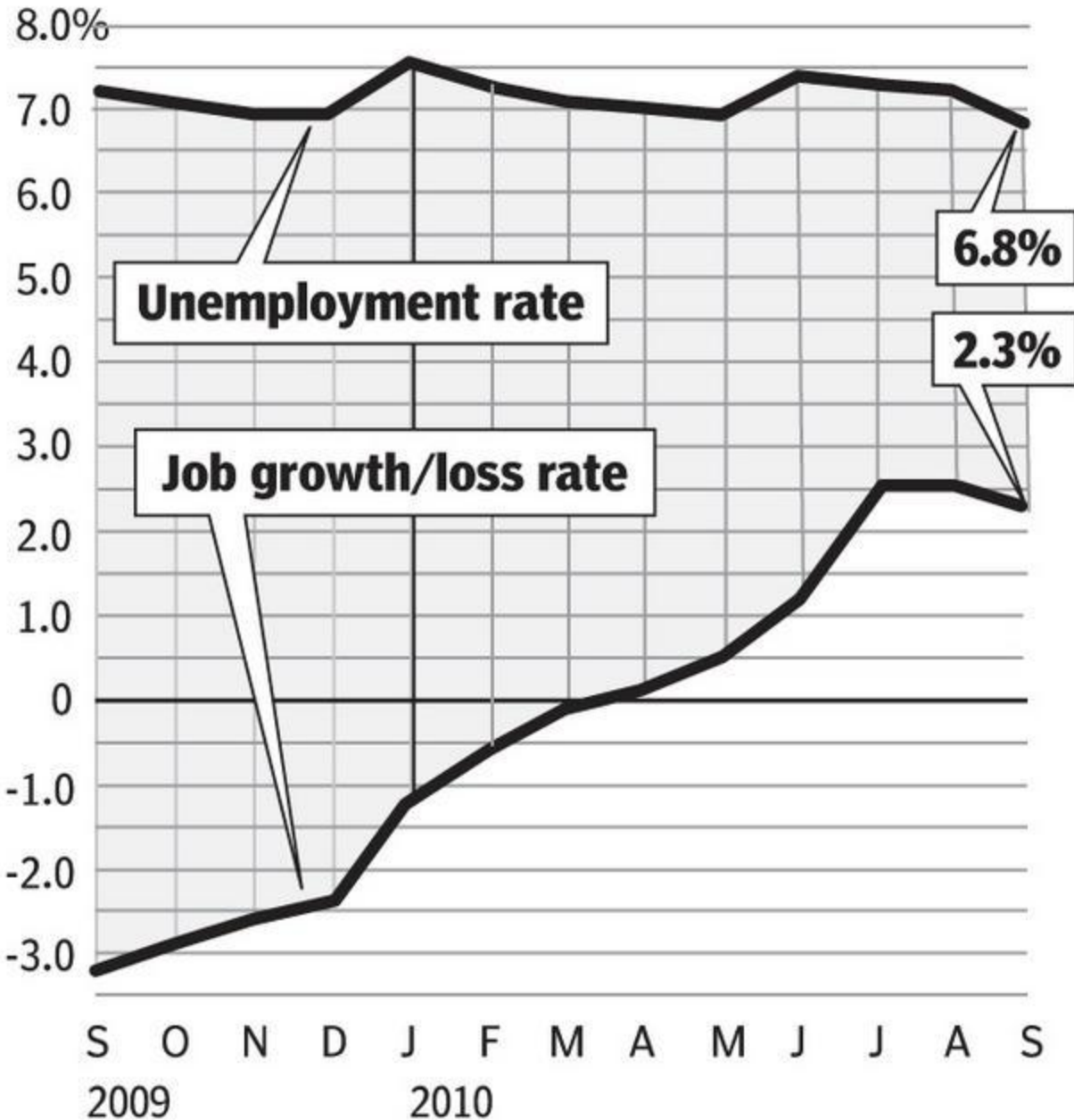
Statewide, the unemployment rate dropped to 8.1 percent, the lowest number since September 2009, said Ann Hatchitt, a Workforce Commission spokeswoman. The state added 3,700 jobs last month.

Austin's job growth rate continues to outpace that of other major Texas cities.

Dallas was up 1 percent from September of last year, Fort Worth grew 0.9 percent, San Antonio was up 0.7 percent, and Houston grew 0.1 percent, according to state numbers.

Central Texas jobs report

The Austin area's unemployment rate fell below 7 percent last month, and job growth continued at a steady pace.



Source: Texas Workforce Commission

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