



## Idaho leads nation in wage growth for 2017

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Idaho is home to the fastest wage growth in the United States, according to a [recent report from the U.S. Department of Commerce](#).

The report was highlighted in a [Wall Street Journal](#) economics blog Tuesday.

Annual wages and salaries of Idaho workers grew 5.3 percent in 2017, eclipsing the 3.1 percent national growth.

The report targets a 9.7 percent earnings growth in durable goods manufacturing as a contributing factor.

The Idaho Department of Labor's Eastern Region, which includes Idaho Falls, saw a 4.4 percent increase in wages over the first three quarters of 2016 and 2017, according to Hope Morrow, the department's Eastern Regional economist.

Despite the optimistic numbers, Idaho ranks 44th nationally in per capita personal income at \$40,507.

A tight labor market — February's unemployment rate was 2.5 percent in the state's Eastern Region — puts pressure on employers to increase wages in order to retain and recruit better employees.

Margaret Wimborne, coordinator of communications and community engagement for Idaho Falls School District 91, said there has been a 2.5 percent increase in annual salary for the district's service employees in the past two years.

"Much of what we do is tied to the funding we receive from the state, and in the past few years the state has increased our funding," she said. "We have passed this on to our employees."

However, District 91, which has about 1,500 employees, is having difficulty locating qualified applicants to fill certain vacancies. The district is undergoing a shortage of candidates in positions involving child nutrition, substitute teaching, and bus driving. And for some, the district is assisting in gaining the qualifications to fill these vacancies.

"We are even actively helping applicants with their CDL license if they wish to apply for a bus driver position," Wimborne said.

The low unemployment rate is an issue Morrow believes will continue to cause concern for area businesses.

“When the unemployment rate is low, that means the pool of people actively looking for work is significantly smaller,” she said.

Overall, the wage increase continues to have area economic officials, such as Jan Rogers, CEO of Eastern Idaho Economic Development, optimistic about the future.

“We are the fastest growing state, and now we’re hitting on the edge of the wage scale,” she said.

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