



Cherokee Tribune

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Unemployment up, third lowest in metro area

By Ashley Fuller
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Cherokee County's unemployment rate jumped almost another full percentage point last month, but remains among the lowest in metro Atlanta.

The county's unemployment rate was 8.5 percent in February, rising for the 10th month in a row, according to the Georgia Department of Labor. The rate was 7.7 per-

cent in January and 4.5 percent in February last year.

Cherokee's labor force grew slightly from 108,428 in January to 108,475 in February. The number of employed people in the county dropped from 100,051 in January to 99,274 in February.

Cherokee was tied with Gwinnett County for the third-lowest unemployment rate in the metro region, behind Fayette (7.9 percent) and Cobb (8.4 percent).

Misti Martin, executive director of the Development Authority of Cherokee County, said she has heard of some companies letting go of temporary help and doing furloughs.

"I think everybody is just trying to maintain," she said. "I have not talked to anybody that



Misti Martin



Bob Robinson

is in a hiring mode."

Bob Robinson, president of Express Personnel in Woodstock, said, while conservative, hiring is continuing in fields such as engineering, government, health care, finance and accounting.

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Unemployment Rates

	Feb. 2009	Jan. 2009	Feb. 2008
Cherokee	8.5%	7.7%	4.5%
Bartow	11.4%	10.7%	6.1%
Clayton	10.9%	10.2%	6.3%
Cobb	8.4%	7.7%	4.6%
DeKalb	9.1%	8.4%	5.4%
Douglas	10.3%	9.5%	5.3%
Fayette	7.9%	6.9%	4.3%
Fulton	9.4%	8.7%	5.4%
Gwinnett	8.5%	7.8%	4.7%
Henry	9.1%	8.4%	5.2%
Paulding	9.7%	8.8%	4.9%
Rockdale	10.3%	9.9%	5.5%
Metro	9.3%	8.6%	5.2%
Georgia	9.3%	8.5%	5.4%
U.S.	8.1%	7.6%	4.8%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Cherokee Tribune Staff

BACKYARD SPOTLIGHT



Above: Videographer Brian Till of Denver, Colo., shoots footage at the home of Ben and Regina Samuel in Bradshaw Farm for the new Home & Garden Television (HGTV) series, 'Bang For Your Buck.' The show, which will air in June, features upgrades made to the back yards of three Atlanta-area homes including the Samuels' in the Hickory Flat neighborhood. **Right:** Ben and Regina Samuel's backyard. For more, see the story on **Page 7B**.



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County property assessments about to begin

Returns already double past average

By Ashley Fuller
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John Adams

Cherokee County residents have just a few more days to file their return on property form prior to this year's assessments.

Officials said the economy has led to an increase in the number of returns on real and personal property filed this year. The returns are due by April 1.

A return on property is a declaration of "what you have, and what you think it is worth," according to John Adams, chief assessor for the county.

On the form, taxpayers describe their property along with any changes to it over the past year, such as an addition, a demolition or storm damage that has not been completely repaired.

"We encourage people

to file," Adams said, noting forms can be found on the county government's Web site at www.cherokeega.com.

"Several people have brought us something that we did not know about."

He said in an average year, the office would receive between 200 and 300 property returns. This year, Adams said the number already has reached 600.

"In their particular neighborhood, there may have been a lot of foreclosures," he said as to why more people are filing. An example, he said, is a

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Administration unveils major financial overhaul

By Martin Crutsinger
Associated Press Writer



WASHINGTON — The Obama administration on Thursday unveiled a sweeping overhaul of the financial system designed to impose greater regulation on major players such as hedge funds.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner told lawmakers that the changes are needed to fix the flaws exposed by the current financial crisis, the worst to hit the country in seven decades.

The goal is to repair a system that has proven "too unstable and fragile," he said.

"Over the past 18 months, we have faced the most severe global financial crisis in generations," Geithner said in testimony to the House Financial Services Committee. "To address this will require comprehensive reform. Not modest repairs at the margin, but new rules of the game."

The administration's proposal, which will require congressional

"Let me be clear. The days when a major insurance company could bet the house on credit default swaps with no one watching and no credible backing to protect the company or taxpayers must end."

—Timothy Geithner, treasury secretary

approval, would represent a major expansion of federal authority over the financial system. Highlights of the plan include:

■ Imposing tougher standards on financial

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Sources: More U.S. troops for Afghan war

No official word from Obama spokesman

By Anne Gearan and Pamela Hess
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama plans to dispatch additional U.S. troops plus hundreds of civilian advisers in hopes of turning around a faltering war in Afghanistan and will recommend increasing aid to neighboring Pakistan so long as leaders there confront militancy, people familiar with the forthcoming plan said Thursday.

Obama plans to lay out his revamped strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan today. Several sources said it includes 20 recommendations for countering a persistent insurgency that spans the two countries' border.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs would not discuss specifics of the plan, but said Obama is beginning to discuss its findings with members of Congress and others.

Obama's top military advisers briefed key lawmakers Thursday. In broad terms, Obama will define U.S. objectives as eliminating the threat from al-Qaida to undermine or topple U.S.-backed elected governments or to launch attacks on the United States, its interests and allies, the sources said.

Sources described the recommendations on condition of anonymity because the final wording was not complete. The new plan identified al-Qaida as the target in a larger network of insurgents who threaten U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, often from sanctuaries across the border in Pakistan.

The additional 4,000 troops will be devoted to training and advising the Afghan armed forces, defense officials said. The latest additions would head to Afghanistan this spring and summer. They come on top of about 17,000 combat and support troops Obama wants in place by the end of the summer.

The forthcoming White House review also says the U.S. will add hundreds of civilian advisers to those already in Afghanistan. The so-called civilian surge would concentrate on improving life for ordinary

Afghans, and would include experts in agriculture in a country where subsistence farming is the norm. The civilians are also meant to help extend government services and the administration of justice.

The plan notes that the top U.S. general in Afghanistan still wants some 10,000 or 11,000 additional U.S. forces next year, but does not say whether Obama intends to fulfill that request now, sources said. That decision would come by the end of this year.

The plan also strongly backs a recommendation to increase aid to Pakistan, conditioned on improvements in that government's handling of militants in the border region, officials said. The plan would triple humanitarian aid to \$1.5 billion a year for five years.

It would tie military aid to performance, with a spe-



President Obama



Robert Gibbs

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55 LOW
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SAYING GOODBYE

Country singer dies at 61

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