



## State Representative Gary Hilliard

Proudly Representing District 76

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### Maine's Private Sector Employment Reached New High in 2016

The [Center for Workforce Research and Information \(CWRI\)](#), part of the [Maine Department of Labor](#), has published its annual benchmark of labor force and employment data in cooperation with the [U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

“I am pleased to announce that the State has reached its pre-recessionary levels of private sector employment,” said Governor Paul R. LePage. “We must continue the reforms that have put us on a path to prosperity and not make poor policy choices that will drive workers and job creators from our state. Maine must compete with other states and countries for the people, investments, jobs, and industries that will increase the earnings of our people and attract new residents to grow our workforce and meet the needs of these employers.”

A blog titled, “[2016 Workforce Data Revisions: Stronger Growth Than Previously Thought](#)” discusses the annual revisions based on more complete data. The revisions indicate the unemployment rate was little changed throughout 2016, and nonfarm payroll job growth was stronger than previously thought.

Commissioner of Labor Jeanne Paquette stated, “Maine’s 2016 gain in payroll jobs—6,700—was higher than original estimates and the largest gain since 2000. These revisions also show a stronger gain in 2015. Maine ended last year only 400 total jobs away from our 2007 pre-recession peak, and our private sector reached a new all-time high of 517,300 jobs.”

In addition to the revision in payroll jobs and the unemployment rate, the broadest measure of labor underutilization, known as U-6, declined to 8.7 percent in 2016. The U-6 rate includes people who want a job but were not engaged in work search, those working part time who want full-time work, and the unemployed. Of the 14 years the U-6 measure has been available, it has only been lower in 2006.

[CWRI](#), part of the Maine Department of Labor, develops and disseminates State and area labor market information to assist officials, employers, educators, trainers, and the public in making decisions that promote economic opportunity and efficient **use of Maine's labor** resources.

Maine.gov User Survey

***Feedback Needed***

A user needs analysis is currently being conducted to learn about ways in which [Maine.gov](#) can better serve constituents, business owners, and citizens.

Please take five minutes to fill out the survey found [here](#) regarding the [Maine.gov](#) Web site and the online services it provides.

The survey is being **conducted by InforME, the State's digital government portal provider**. For more information about InforME, please click [here](#).

Bureau of Insurance Launches New Consumer and Industry Friendly Web Site

***Site Offers Improved Accessibility and More Consumer Information***

The [Maine Bureau of Insurance](#) has launched a new, improved, and expanded Web site and is encouraging public input. The site features a brighter, more visually accessible look, increased consumer information on a wide range of insurance topics, and reorganization of insurance industry information for improved ease of use.

Tips from Bureau staff for all users of the new site include:

- review the new “Site Map” to get a quick understanding of how the site is organized;
- bookmark pages that are often used; and
- e-mail the Webmaster (listed on the “[Contact Us](#)” page) with any error messages or broken links.

The Bureau of Insurance can be reached by calling [\(207\) 624-8475](tel:(207)624-8475) or [\(800\) 300-5000](tel:(800)300-5000) (toll free in Maine), or by using Maine Relay 711 (TTY). The Bureau can also be reached via e-mail at [Insurance.PFR@maine.gov](mailto:Insurance.PFR@maine.gov).

### New Federal Ruling May Provide Additional Benefits to Maine Veterans ***The Department of Veterans’ Affairs to Provide Disability Benefits as a Result of Contaminated Water Supply***

Governor Paul R. LePage joined the [Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#) recently to announce expanded support for veterans affected by contaminated drinking water at North Carolina’s [Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base](#).

The VA has pledged to provide disability benefits for diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune to active duty, reserve, and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987. This ruling is similar to the latent Agent Orange ruling that now provides disability benefit compensation and healthcare to Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange herbicide while serving in and around Vietnam.

Governor LePage expressed concern about how Maine veterans affected by this ruling will be cared for and informed of this information. "Since there's no way of truly knowing how many veterans and family members currently living in Maine have been affected by the contamination at Camp Lejeune and now may have access to treatment under this new ruling, I strongly encourage anyone who was stationed at Camp Lejeune to contact the [Bureau of Veterans' Services](#)."

The VA has identified eight additional diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply. They are:

- adult leukemia;
- aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes;
- bladder cancer;
- kidney cancer;
- liver cancer;

- multiple myeloma;
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma; and
- Parkinson's disease.

The area included in this presumption is all of Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River, including satellite camps and housing areas.

**The VA's recent ruling complements the healthcare and disability compensation already provided for 15 illnesses or conditions as part of the "Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012".** The Camp Lejeune Act requires the VA to provide healthcare to veterans who served at Camp Lejeune and to reimburse family members, or pay providers, for medical expenses for those who resided there for not fewer than 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987.

In the early 1980s, volatile organic compounds, trichloroethylene (TCE), a metal degreaser, and perchloroethylene (PCE), a dry cleaning agent, as well as benzene and vinyl chloride, were discovered in two on-base water supply systems at Camp Lejeune. The contaminated wells supplying the water systems were shut down in February 1985.

For full text of the related press release, click [here](#). Please contact [mainebvs@maine.gov](mailto:mainebvs@maine.gov) or call [\(207\) 430-6035](tel:2074306035) for additional information.

IF&W Biologist Receives Highest Honor from the Maine Wildlife Society

**Charlie Todd, Maine IF&W's Endangered Species Coordinator who spearheaded the recovery of bald eagles in Maine, received the [Maine Chapter of the Wildlife Society's](#) highest honor recently when he was presented with the Award of Professional Achievement.**

The award is given to wildlife professionals who have a sustained record of exceptional contributions and career achievements, and who exemplify a level of excellence and productivity that has resulted in significant advances in knowledge or lasting benefits to wildlife conservation.

**Charlie's accomplishments are well known, as for 30 years, he oversaw Maine's bald eagle program. During that time, Maine's eagle population rose from 41 nesting pairs in 1976 to over 750 nesting pairs in 2012.**

Charlie is also known for his ability to get multiple groups with diverse interest together to work towards common goal. **According to the award, "Charlie worked tirelessly...protecting eagle nest sites.** This required extensive collaboration and communication with hundreds of private landowners, industrial forest landowners, land trusts, and municipalities. His skill in working with landowners, coupled with an easy-going manner often helped defuse potentially tense interactions with landowners and industry personnel. **Charlie's diplomatic approach and technical expertise resulted in many collaborative projects with Native**

American tribes, universities, pulp and paper mills, State and federal agencies, and other **conservation partners.**”

In addition, Charlie was **responsible for coordinating the State’s re-introduction** and management of peregrine falcons. This included leading a hacking program for 15 years, surveying remote cliffs scattered across Maine, monitoring active nest sites, and working with landowners and State and federal agencies as peregrines took up residence on bridges, popular hiking trails, and in urban settings. **Today, thanks to Charlie’s leadership,** Maine is now home to about 25 nesting pairs of this once extirpated species.

#### House Republican Office Links

To connect with the House Republican Office on the Web, you can visit <http://mehousegop.org/>, find us on Facebook here, or follow us on Twitter: @MaineHouseGOP.