

## The January Review

As theoretical economists or mathematical statisticians, we occasionally wish it weren't so, but the labor market exists in a complex matrix of concrete statutory rules and legal regulations that are sometimes awkward compared with abstract models. As is our custom, we use the January issue of the *Review* to catalog the major changes in such legislation as it governs labor, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation.

John J. Fitzpatrick, Jr., summarizes what he characterizes as a lesser volume of State labor legislation in 2004 than in the recent past. However, he notes that much of the legislation that was enacted was legally significant and addressed "hot button" issues such as worker privacy, drug testing, and plant closings.

Glenn Whittington surveys changes in the laws governing workers' compensation. The major story in this arena was the enactment of a major reform package in California. The legislation transferred the cost of administering the program to the employer community, encourages small business efforts to accommodate return to work, and permits employers to establish medical provider networks. For many years, Glenn has analyzed workers' compensation laws for our readers. Upon submitting this year's analysis, he announced his retirement from government service. We thank him for his contribution and wish him a successful retirement.

Loryn Lancaster reports on developments in Federal and State unemployment insurance law. The most significant legislation at the federal level put standards in place to curb certain abusive manipulation of the experience-rating provisions of the State unemployment tax acts and gave the States access to the Department of Health and Human Services' National Directory of New Hires to facilitate detecting individuals who attempt to continue collecting unemployment benefits after getting a new job.

## Experience of unemployment in 2003

In 2003, the "work-experience unemployment rate" for all workers—defined as the number unemployed at some time during the year as a proportion of the number who worked or looked for work during the year—was 10.7 percent, down from 11.0 percent in 2002. The 2003 rate is low by historical standards, but is above the series low of 8.6 percent reached in 2000.

Among those who experienced unemployment in 2003, the median number of weeks spent looking for work was 16.6 weeks, up from 15.5 weeks the year before. About 2.8 million individuals had looked for a job but did not work at all in 2003, about the same as a year earlier. For additional information, see "Work Experience of the Population in 2003," news release USDL 04-2532.

## Workplace injuries

The incidence rate for on-the-job injuries and illnesses declined in private industry from 5.3 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers in 2002 to 5.0 in 2003. Goods-producing industries as a whole had a rate of 6.7 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers while service-providing industries as a whole had a rate of 4.4 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers. Manufacturing and construction had the highest incidence rates among the industry supersectors: 6.8 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers. Financial activities had the lowest rate: 1.7. Additional information is available from "Workplace Injuries and Illnesses in 2003," news release USDL 04-2486.

## Day of injury

The 1.1 million cases of lost-worktime injuries and illnesses reported in 2002 that included data on the time of the incident were fairly evenly distributed from Monday through Friday. Among

high incident occupations, truck drivers (includes heavy, tractor-trailer, and light or delivery truck drivers), janitors and cleaners, and carpenters had a greater proportion of injuries and illnesses on Mondays. In contrast, cooks and sales workers had a greater proportion of their injuries and illnesses on Thursdays and Fridays. Additional information is available from "Time of Lost-Workday Injuries and Illnesses, 2002: First Results Announced by BLS," news release USDL 04-2407.

## Volunteers in 2004

About 64.5 million persons, or 28.8 percent of the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and older, volunteered through or for organizations at least once from September 2003 to September 2004. One-fourth of men and about one-third of women did such volunteer work, about the same proportions as in the prior year. Women volunteered at a higher rate than men across age groups, education levels, and other major characteristics.

The main organization—the organization for which the volunteer worked the most hours during the year—was most frequently either religious (34.4 percent of all volunteers) or educational/youth service related (27.0 percent). Another 12.4 percent of volunteers performed activities mainly for social or community service organizations, and 7.5 percent volunteered most of their hours for hospitals or other health organizations.

Older volunteers were more likely to work mainly for religious organizations than were their younger counterparts. For example, 45.2 percent of volunteers age 65 and older performed volunteer activities mainly through or for a religious organization, compared with 28.5 percent of volunteers age 16 to 24 years. Younger individuals were more likely to volunteer through or for educational or youth service organizations. Find out more in "Volunteering in the United States, 2004," news release USDL 04-2503. □