

Statement of US Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis on December 2009 employment numbers

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis issued the following statement on the December 2009 Employment Situation report released today:

"This past December, the economy lost 85,000 jobs, and the unemployment rate remained unchanged at 10 percent.

"Today's numbers underscore that we still have work to do before we can be sure that all Americans have access to good jobs. We are working aggressively to reverse these conditions for American workers and their families.

"Despite the bumpy road to recovery, we have made progress. One year ago, our economy was losing close to 700,000 jobs a month. We met this challenge head on through the Recovery Act — putting a plan in place designed to create jobs and drive economic growth through a combination of tax relief for individuals and businesses, aid to hard-hit families and state and local governments, and funding for science, technology and infrastructure projects across the country. Thanks to this program, we have saved or created more than 1 million jobs.

"Over the past year, the Obama Administration has continued to take bold steps to attack this recession, and the Department of Labor has undertaken measures to ensure that we fulfill our responsibility to provide workers with the assistance they need today and invest in their future.

"Earlier this week, I awarded nearly \$100 million in Energy Training Partnership grants that will provide training for workers and prepare them to enter the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries, as well as green occupations within other industries. And over the next month, we will release an additional \$560 million in grants for career training in clean and renewable energy, health care and other high growth sectors.

"As we invest in workers, we are also providing them the assistance they need. The Recovery Act provided additional weeks of unemployment insurance for all workers and is subsidizing COBRA health insurance premiums for many unemployed. We have distributed \$2.8 billion worth of incentive payments to 32 states to modernize their unemployment insurance programs so that more workers, including recent entrants to the labor force, part-timers, and people in training programs, are now eligible for benefits for the very first time. We also have awarded more than \$101 million in National Emergency Grants, with nearly \$59 million released in 2009, providing services to an estimated 28,000 dislocated workers.

"We will continue to work aggressively to ensure that we provide workers with the assistance they need to help them find good jobs, and I am confident that our initiatives will help turn our economy around, creating pathways to success for all of Americans."