

Ocala StarBanner

PLAYING POLITICS: GEORGE CLOONEY IN 'IDES OF MARCH,' 1D



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For many, a job is now a dim memory

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For more Americans, being out of work has become a semi-permanent condition.

Nearly one-third of the unemployed — nearly 4.5 million people — have had no job for a year or more. That's a record high. Many are older workers who have found it especially hard to find jobs.

And economists say their prospects won't brighten much even after the economy starts to strengthen and hiring picks up. Even if they can find a job, it will likely pay far less than their old ones did.

The outlook is unlikely to improve

Nearly one-third of the unemployed — nearly 4.5 million people — have had no job for a year or more. That's a record high.

today, when the government issues its monthly jobs report. Economists predict it will show that employers added a net 56,000 jobs in September.

That's far fewer than needed to reduce unemployment. The unemployment rate is expected to remain 9.1 percent for a third straight month. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben

Bernanke last week called long-term unemployment a "national crisis" and said it should be one of Congress' top priorities.

When people are out of work for a year or more, their skills often decline. Their professional networks shrink. Companies hesitate to hire them. The problem feeds on itself.

"It's a serious threat," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. "A growing proportion of the labor force is becoming disenfranchised."

Long-term unemployment sets this recession and weak recovery apart

JOBLESS on Page 5A

STATE ECONOMY

Florida could face budget shortfall of up to \$2.25B

The expected gloomy forecast will likely result in another round of cuts to a variety of state programs.

By Lloyd Dunkelberger
Tallahassee bureau

TALLAHASSEE — Another round of deep and painful state spending cuts for schools, health care and other Florida government programs looms, as lawmakers learned Thursday that they could face a budget shortfall as high as \$2.25 billion in the coming year.

"We're not that optimistic at all," said Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island. "We're all hopeful that the economy will turn around. But at this point, we don't see it."

"We're going to have to find another \$2 billion this year and it's going to be painful," he said.

With signs that the economy might be improving over the summer, lawmakers were hopeful that developing the 2012-13 budget would be eased by an increase in state revenue.

But the economy has faltered and state economists are scheduled to meet Tuesday and significantly reduce their revenue projections for the coming year by as much as \$2 billion, according to a briefing given to the House Appropriations Committee.

Staff director JoAnne Leznoff told the committee members that the earlier budget projections represented a "sunny day."

"Sadly, we don't think it will last very long," she told the committee.

If the revenue estimate declines by \$2 billion, it could leave lawmakers facing a budget shortfall as high as \$2.25 billion. If revenues are cut by \$1 billion, it would leave a \$1.15 billion gap.

That could force lawmakers to consider budget cuts of up to nearly 10 percent, although a more likely scenario would require lawmakers to cut general revenue spending by a range of about 2.5

STATE on Page 5A

ROADWORK

Baseline Road delayed; Sharpes Ferry might be too

Both projects are now expected to be completed by the end of December



Stephen Ford, left, a worker with C.W. Roberts Contracting Inc., carries a bag of stakes while marking the grade for new road being constructed along Baseline Road. **SEE MORE PHOTOS AT OCALA.COM**

By Bill Thompson
Staff writer

Motorists traveling east of Ocala will have to wait a few extra weeks for some road projects to wrap up.

Contractors working on Baseline Road and the replacement of the Sharpes Ferry Bridge have asked state transportation officials for extensions in their schedules.

Florida Department of Transportation spokesman Steve Olson said in an email that the widening of Baseline Road is now expected to be finished at the end of December — about two months behind schedule.

THE PROJECTS

■ Baseline Road is being expanded to four lanes for the six-mile stretch between State Road 40 to 1,000 feet south of Maricamp Road.

■ The Sharpes Ferry Bridge along County Road 314 is being replaced with a new span over the Ocklawaha River.

Inclement weather was to blame, Olson explained.

Senior FDOT officials, he added, have approved the request for an extension from the contractor, Tallahassee-based road builder C.W. Roberts Contracting Inc.,

which began work on Baseline Road in October 2009.

The \$23.3-million project, paid for with federal stimulus funding, entails expanding Baseline Road from two lanes to four for the six-mile stretch between State Road 40 to 1,000 feet south of Maricamp Road.

As part of that C.W. Roberts also is building two bridges — one along Maricamp and another on the southern end of the Baseline project — that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection sought to link parts of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway.

Meanwhile, the FDOT is

DELAYS on Page 5A



President Barack Obama gestures during a news conference on Thursday.

Obama: Act on jobs bill or get run out of town

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A combative President Barack Obama challenged a divided Congress on Thursday to unite behind his jobs bill or get ready to be run "out of town" by angry voters. Hoping to use public frustration and economic worry as leverage, he called his proposal an insurance plan against a painful return to recession.

In a news conference long on restatements of his ideas, Obama laid bare the dynamic that now is Washington: The era of compromise is over.

Frustrated over getting nowhere with Republicans, Obama demanded that they explain themselves to the country and promised to keep "hammering away until something gets done."

Despite Obama's taunts, Republicans showed no signs of switching positions. Instead, they pressed unsuccessfully for a symbolic vote later in the day so they could demonstrate their opposition to the bill the president submitted

OBAMA on Page 5A

Homeownership rate falls off sharply

The homeownership gap between whites and blacks is now at its widest since 1960.

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The American dream of homeownership has felt its biggest drop since the Great Depression, according to new 2010 census figures released Thursday.

The analysis by the Census Bureau found the homeownership rate fell to 65.1 percent last year. While that level

remains the second highest decennial rate, analysts say the U.S. may never return to its mid-decade housing boom peak in which nearly 70 percent of occupied households were owned by their residents.

The reason: A longer-term economic reality of tighter credit, prolonged job losses and reduced government involvement.

Unemployed young adults are least likely to own, delaying first-time home purchases to live with Mom and Dad. Middle-aged adults 35-64, mostly homeowners who were hit

with mortgage foreclosures or bankruptcy after the housing bust in 2006, are at their lowest levels of ownership in decades.

Measured by race, the homeownership gap between whites and blacks is now at its widest since 1960, wiping out more than 40 years of gains.

"The changes now taking place are mind-boggling: The housing market has completely crashed and attitudes toward housing are shifting from owning to renting," said Patrick Newport, economist with IHS Global

HOUSING on Page 5A

TODAY:
A shower.
55% chance of rain.

HIGH 86
LOW 69

TOMORROW:
High: 83 Low: 67
60% chance of rain.
5-day forecast, 6B

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COMICS 5D

CROSSWORD 3D
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