

LOCAL

Fact check: At NC rally, Trump claims new employment statistics are 'massive scandal'

BY MARY RAMSEY
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At a North Carolina campaign rally, former President Donald Trump referred to a routine employment data update as the Biden-Harris administration "fraudulently manipulating job statistics."

Trump, speaking at a Wednesday rally in Asheboro, called revised employment numbers released earlier in the day by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics a "massive scandal." The Republican presidential candidate appeared alongside his running mate, Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance, and also spoke about national security.

"It really isn't a revision. It's a total lie ... There's never been any revision like this," he said before claiming the information was "leaked," despite the Biden-Harris administration wanting to withhold it until after the

presidential election.

But the revisions — which showed there were 818,000 fewer jobs in March than initially reported — are part of a scheduled review and released as part of regular reporting by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. And it's not the biggest revision in history.

"They're just following processes they've been following for decades," said Steven Allen, a professor of economics at N.C. State University.

WHY WERE JOB NUMBERS REVISED DOWN?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics regularly conducts revisions of employment data as more information on the job market becomes available, Allen said. The bureau compares data collected from monthly surveys of households and businesses with quarterly "anchor" data reported by

state employment agencies.

Revisions to March 2023 data, for example, came out in August 2023 and revised down employment gains by 306,000 positions. The 2024 numbers released Wednesday are still preliminary, and final numbers won't be released until February, The Wall Street Journal notes.

Comparing data from different sources helps account for "inconsistencies" and improve the bureau's methodology, Allen said.

Since 2006, job numbers have been revised down 11 times and revised up eight times, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Business. The biggest decrease in that time period came in 2009.

Allen said the latest adjustment is more than average — about half of 1% compared to the norm of about one-tenth of 1%. But from a "big picture"

perspective, he added, the country is still adding "a lot of jobs every month."

"In some sectors, like transportation and warehousing, they didn't count enough employees, they're going to raise the employment estimate ... In others, the revision (down) is going to be bigger," he said.

Allen said he understands why politicians "seize upon possible data points" during an election but the Bureau of Labor Statistics is apolitical.

"I've been doing this since the '70s. This is the first time I've ever seen a benchmark revision study of the employment statistics show up in the news," he said.

TRUMP JOB NUMBERS VS. BIDEN-HARRIS JOB NUMBERS

Trump also claimed Wednesday the economy functioned better during his presidency than Biden's term and that unem-

ployment will rise if Vice President Kamala Harris, his Democratic opponent, is elected.

Data show a complicated picture.

Trump is the only modern president to leave office with fewer U.S. jobs than when he took office, Reuters reported in 2021. The unemployment rate was 6.7% at the end of his term, up two percentage points from the start of the term.

The COVID-19 pandemic drove much of those job losses, Reuters noted. The unemployment rate sat at 3.5% in February 2020 but jumped to 14.8% during the pandemic.

The unemployment rate now is lower than when Trump left office, but it ticked up in recent months. July's

unemployment rate, the most recent figure available, was 4.3%, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported. That's up from 3.5% a year ago.

North Carolina posted lower unemployment rates since the end of the pandemic and beginning of the Biden's term, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. The state's unemployment rate was 3.7% in July, compared to 8.7% at the same point in Trump's presidency and 5.6% when Trump left office in January 2021.

Aspects of the labor market are starting to "come back in line with historical trends" after the pandemic triggered a spike in unemployment followed by a recovery where there were "many more job openings" than applicants, Allen said.

"We're in a Goldilocks position right now, but that could change," he said of the job market.

Both Trump and Harris gave speeches on the economy this month in North Carolina, a battleground state that could play a pivotal role in November. Statewide polls show a tightening race since Harris took over the Democratic ticket.

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Hopewell High School principal suspended days before CMS school year starts

BY REBECCA NOEL
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Hopewell High School Principal LeDuan Pratt was suspended with pay one week before school starts Monday for Char-

lotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools on Friday only told parents in an email that Pratt was "currently out" and didn't provide other information about his absence. Mike Turner,

a retired former CMS principal, will act as principal at the school until further notice.

CMS responded to a records request from The Charlotte Observer and confirmed Pratt was placed on a paid suspen-

sion Aug. 19. CMS didn't give a reason for the suspension.

"We cannot state a reason as we cannot comment on personnel issues," CMS officials wrote to The Observer in an email Friday.



Pratt was named principal of Garinger High School in 2022 prior to moving to Hopewell, which is located in northern Mecklenburg County near the Huntersville city limits.

CMS previously suspended Pratt along

with two other administrators in 2018 when he was principal of Carmel Middle School, the Observer previously reported. CMS did not give a reason for the 2018 suspension at the time but confirmed there was no "improper behavior by CMS personnel towards any student and there is no criminal investigation of any CMS personnel related to this."

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