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EMPLOYMENT IN MICHIGAN REBOUNDS IN SEPTEMBER ACROSS ALL REGIONS

Jobseekers in Michigan received some encouraging news as regional unemployment rates fell in September across most of the state, according to the latest data from the Michigan Department of Technology, Management & Budget. Not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates dropped in 16 of Michigan's 17 labor market areas. Wayne Rourke, labor market information director, noted that much of this decrease was expected due to seasonal education-related hiring with the start of the academic year.

For the Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Battle Creek areas, the trend was clear: employment numbers are on the rise. Fifteen labor market areas in Michigan reported employment increases over the month, with a median employment gain of 1.5%. The Battle Creek area saw a 0.7% increase in its unemployment rate compared to last year, reflecting the challenges that some local areas still face despite overall improvement. Still a significant decrease from the previous month and tied for highest growth in the state last month.

How Does Michigan's Employment Stack Up?

Michigan's September projected unemployment rate of 4.5% sits a above the national average of 4.1%. Meanwhile, several states boast significantly lower rates. South Dakota (2.0%), North Dakota (2.3%), and Vermont (2.2%) lead the way with impressive employment numbers.

How does Michigan stack up against these top performers?

States With Lowest Unemployment
South Dakota: 2.0%
North Dakota: 2.3%
Vermont: 2.2%
New Hampshire: 2.5%
Nebraska: 2.7%
Maine: 2.8%
Mississippi: 2.8%
Alabama: 2.9%
Iowa: 2.9%
Hawaii: 2.9%
Virginia: 2.9%

Overall, the data reflects a promising trend for Michigan, with local areas like Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Battle Creek benefiting from seasonal employment opportunities and gradual workforce growth. However, there are still some challenges ahead as year-over-year unemployment rates have increased slightly in many regions, reminding us that the road ahead needs to overcome uncertanties.

Unemployment	Jul	Aug	Sep
United States	4.3	4.2	4.1
Michigan	4.4	4.5	4.5
Battle Creek	6.3	5.6	4.9
Detroit	8.2	5.1	5.2
Grand Rapids	4.4	4.0	3.5
Kalamazoo	5.2	4.7	4.1

SOURCE: BLS.GOV

September 2024 data is preliminary data. Official numbers release on November 1st, 2024. Data in this release is not seasonally adjusted. As a result, employment and unemployment trends may differ from previously released Michigan seasonally adjusted data.

THE GOLD OF THE FUTURE

CAN MICHIGAN LEAD IN SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING?

The CHIPS and Science Act is driving a $325 million investment into Hemlock Semiconductor (HSC) in Michigan, creating over 1,000 jobs in engineering, manufacturing, research, and skilled trades. This influx will boost local businesses, services, and Michigan's manufacturing sector.

Polysilicon's Role in the Semiconductor Industry

Polysilicon, essential for semiconductors, is central to this investment. HSC, a leading producer of polysilicon, will build a new facility, increasing output and reinforcing Michigan's role in the semiconductor supply chain. The investment will create 180 permanent jobs and many construction opportunities, boosting the Saginaw region.

The semiconductor shortage highlighted the risks of relying on overseas suppliers. In 2021, Michigan's auto industry faced delays due to chip shortages. The CHIPS Act and Make it in Michigan Competitiveness Fund aim to attract advanced manufacturing, with $1.5 billion in CHIPS funding allocated to Michigan over the past two years.

Michigan is investing in infrastructure, workforce training, and incentives to support advanced manufacturing, paving the way for the state's emergence as a production hub.

Impact on Michigan Manufacturers

HSC's expansion will strengthen supply chains, improve access to materials, and build a skilled workforce. Local manufacturers will benefit through partnerships, reduced reliance on foreign suppliers, faster production, and cost savings. Ancillary industries, such as tool and machinery suppliers, will also gain.

The focus on advanced manufacturing is driving investments in education and technical training. Local colleges and trade schools are adding courses on semiconductor technology, automation, and related skills to prepare the workforce.

A Call to Action for Manufacturers

For manufacturers in Michigan or considering expansion, now is the time to act. State-supported initiatives like the CHIPS Act are building infrastructure, training talent, and creating growth opportunities.

Hemlock Semiconductor's new facility will benefit Michigan's entire manufacturing ecosystem. As U.S. Senator Gary Peters said, "Michigan knows all too well what happens when we are dependent on semiconductor chips made halfway around the world." Bringing semiconductor production back to the U.S. is crucial for a stable local supply.

Beyond job creation, this move aims to create a resilient manufacturing environment. Manufacturers aligning with this vision will benefit from immediate opportunities and long-term stability.

Michigan is positioning itself as a key player in semiconductor manufacturing. The investment will create jobs, stabilize supply chains, and foster local partnerships. For manufacturers, the opportunities are too significant to ignore—now is the time to seize the momentum.

HOW IS THE ECONOMY *DOING?* IT DEPENDS ON THE POLITICAL PARTY OF THE PERSON YOU ASK.

In October 2024, consumer sentiment reached 70.5, marking its highest level since April and a steady three-month rise. This upward trend reflects improved buying conditions for durable goods, partially driven by easing interest rates, and sentiment is now over 40% higher than the low of June 2022. The impending presidential election is influencing expectations, with shifts noted among political groups: Republican sentiment rose by 8% due to optimism about their candidate's economic impact, while Democratic sentiment dipped by 1%, and Independents saw a moderate 4% increase.

Year-ahead inflation expectations held steady at 2.7%, maintaining stability within the pre-pandemic range of 2.3-3.0%. Long-term inflation expectations decreased slightly to 3.0% from last month's 3.1%, though still above the typical range observed before the pandemic. As the November data release approaches, consumer perspectives remain closely tied to political outcomes, suggesting that the election's results may bring additional adjustments to economic expectations.

Metric	Percentage Change	Good or Bad?	Explanation
Index of Consumer Sentiment	+0.6% month-to-month, +10.5% year-to-year	Good	A higher sentiment index suggests growing confidence in the economy, which can boost spending.
Current Economic Conditions	+2.5% month-to-month, -8.1% year-to-year	Mixed	Monthly improvement is a positive sign, but year-over-year decline shows ongoing concerns.
Index of Consumer Expectations	-0.4% month-to-month, +25.0% year-to-year	Mostly Good	Consumer outlook remains strong year-over-year, though monthly decline shows slight caution.
Year-Ahead Inflation Expectations	Unchanged at 2.7%	Good	Stable inflation expectations indicate consumers expect manageable cost increases.
Long-Run Inflation Expectations	-0.1% from last month	Good	A slight decrease in long-run expectations signals optimism for stable, long-term prices.

THE IOT AND INDUSTRY 4.0 ARE HERE AND WHAT IN THE WORLD DOES THAT MEAN?

Buckle up, because Michigan's manufacturing scene is about to go full throttle into the future.

You might have heard the buzzwords—Industry 4.0, Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI). Sounds like sci-fi stuff, right? Well, it's happening right here in Michigan, and it's about to revolutionize how we make everything from cars to semiconductors.

What's Industry 4.0, Anyway?
Think of Industry 4.0 as the next big leap in manufacturing. Remember how the first industrial revolution brought in steam power, the second introduced electricity, and the third brought computers into the mix? Well, Industry 4.0 is like the Avengers assembling all those technologies—and more—to create smart factories.

Here's a quick rundown:

- **IoT (Internet of Things):** Machines talking to each other and to us over the internet.
- **AI and Machine Learning:** Computers that learn from data to optimize processes.
- **Big Data Analytics:** Crunching massive amounts of data to find patterns and make better decisions.
- **Robotics and Automation:** Robots handling tasks with precision and speed.
- **Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR):** Enhancing real-world experiences with digital overlays, or immersing in entirely virtual ones.
- **3D Printing:** Creating objects layer by layer, opening up new possibilities in design and production.
- **Edge Computing and 5G:** Faster data processing closer to the source, reducing lag time.

Examples of Industry 4.0 Integration

Smart Supply Chains: Using blockchain for transparent and secure tracking of parts.

Predictive Maintenance: AI algorithms predict equipment failures before they happen, reducing downtime.

Quality Control: Machine vision systems detect defects in real-time, ensuring high-quality output.

Why Manufacturers Need to Jump Onboard

Here's the deal: adopting Industry 4.0 isn't just a nice-to-have; it's a must-have. Manufacturers who don't embrace these technologies risk falling behind. Imagine trying to compete with a company that uses AI to predict equipment failures before they happen or robots to increase production speed and quality.

In a series on Industry 4.0, MITechNews.com explored how General Motors is embracing technology to boost efficiency and cut costs. Tier 1 suppliers like Yazaki North America and Astemo are also leading the charge, integrating smart technologies into their operations.

Astemo's Transformation

For example, Astemo is using IoT sensors and AI analytics to monitor equipment health in real-time. This reduces unexpected downtime and increases productivity.

Yazaki's Innovations

Yazaki North America is leveraging big data analytics to optimize supply chain logistics, reducing delivery times and costs.

The Workforce Angle

It's not just about machines and tech; people are a crucial part of this transformation. A holistic approach equips today's workforce and prepares the next generation, making manufacturing both dynamic and sustainable in the face of change

Upskilling Programs: Training existing workers in new technologies.

Attracting New Talent: Making manufacturing appealing to younger, tech-savvy generations.

Partnerships with Educational Institutions: Collaborating with universities and tech schools to align curricula with Industry 4.0 skills, ensuring a future pipeline of skilled workers.

The Consequences of Standing Still if manufacturers ignore Industry 4.0:

Competitive Disadvantage: Competitors will produce faster, at lower costs, and with better quality.
Loss of Market Share: Customers will favor companies that can meet their needs efficiently.
Talent Drain: Skilled, tech-savvy workers prefer workplaces that prioritize innovation.
Lower Efficiency: Missing out on technologies that optimize and streamline operations.
Higher Operational Costs: Outdated processes lead to resource waste and increased expenses.

The Road Ahead

We're at a turning point. Embracing Industry 4.0 means Michigan manufacturers can lead—not just follow. Collaboration among industry leaders, tech hubs, and our workforce will drive the state's manufacturing forward.

Whether you're a manufacturer, investor, or just curious, now is the time to tune in. The technologies, support, and opportunities are all here.

Industry 4.0 isn't a buzzword—it's the future of manufacturing, right here in Michigan. Let's embrace it, adapt, and pave the way to a smarter, more efficient, and innovative future.

Are Americans Ditching Promotions to Find Happiness?

Many Americans are now declining promotions, preferring work-life balance over career climbing, as they re-evaluate their priorities after the pandemic. Many workers are seeking more balance and fulfillment in their jobs after the pandemic.

This shift signals a significant transformation in the American workplace: aspects such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, and meaningful work are becoming more important than prestige and pay.

Career advancement no longer holds the same appeal for many, especially younger workers, who prioritize flexibility, mental health, and meaningful work over traditional career progression.

Read more about those saying no to promotions here.

ANN ARBOR'S 'RIGHT TO SIT' LAW: REVOLUTIONIZING WORKER RIGHTS OR BURDENING BUSINESSES?

The Ann Arbor City Council's unanimous approval on October 20th, 2024 of the "Right to Sit" ordinance goes beyond legislation—it sparks a conversation about worker well-being that could impact industries beyond the city.

This new law grants workers the right to sit while on the job if it doesn't interfere with their duties. Though it directly affects employees in retail, restaurants, and salons, its impact could extend to manufacturing by encouraging factories to provide seating options where feasible, reducing physical strain on workers and potentially improving productivity, challenging long-standing workplace norms.

A Seat for Every Worker

Councilmember Ayesha Ghazi Edwin, who championed the ordinance, emphasized equity and accessibility. "By accommodating the option to sit, we're not just offering comfort—we're opening doors for those who might have been excluded from certain jobs due to physical or medical limitations," she said. This is especially relevant to manufacturing, where physical demands often deter many potential workers.

Manufacturing's Standing Tradition

Standing for long periods is the norm in manufacturing, contributing to health issues like muscle fatigue and joint pain. Studies show that around 50% of manufacturing workers experience musculoskeletal disorders due to prolonged standing. The "Right to Sit" encourages factories to rethink their operations. Could seating options reduce health issues and boost productivity?

Learning from Precedent

Ann Arbor's initiative follows similar laws in California, strengthened by the 2016 *Kilby v. CVS Pharmacy* ruling, which requires seating when feasible. This ruling clarified that employers must provide seating for employees if the nature of their work reasonably allows it, emphasizing worker comfort and reducing health risks. States like Florida, Oregon, and Wisconsin also mandate seating accommodations, reducing worker fatigue and increasing efficiency.

Global Movements Toward Ergonomics

The European Union mandates workplace health measures, including seating provisions. German manufacturers, for instance, use ergonomic designs with adjustable workstations, improving worker health and productivity.

Balancing Business and Well-being

Some business owners are concerned about the costs of integrating seating into manufacturing. Ann Arbor's ordinance allows employers to demonstrate infeasibility if necessary. However, companies that invest in ergonomic solutions often see lower absenteeism, reduced turnover, and improved morale—factors that can provide a competitive edge.

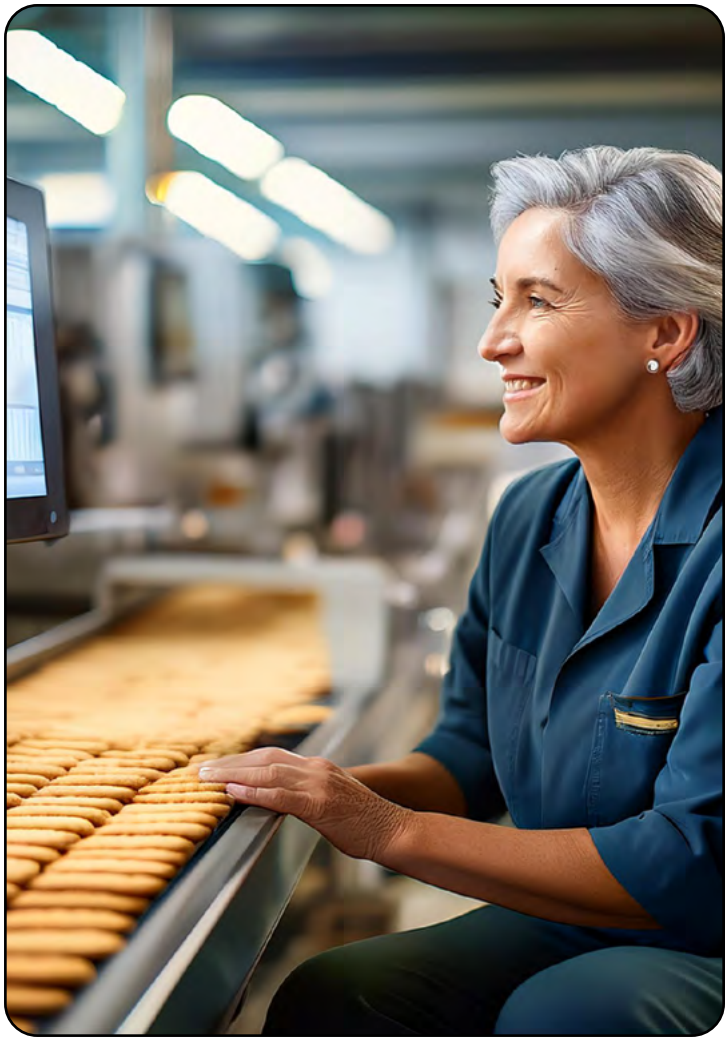
A Future of Inclusive Manufacturing

Ann Arbor's ordinance could inspire statewide change, but it also presents practical challenges for businesses. Local advocacy groups are optimistic, but business owners may face financial and logistical hurdles.

The Road Ahead

Manufacturers have an opportunity to lead by example but must also consider the costs of integrating seating. Embracing the right to sit could attract a wider talent pool, but companies need to balance this with operational efficiency. Technological advancements, such as automation and adjustable workstations, provide flexibility but may require significant investment.

Ann Arbor's "Right to Sit" ordinance sets a precedent for the future of work but also challenges industries to adapt. While prioritizing well-being, the costs and feasibility of these changes must be weighed. Investing in worker health can benefit everyone, but the path forward will have challenges, and other cities must consider both advantages and difficulties before following Ann Arbor's lead.



Ann Arbor's 'Right to Sit' law allows workers to sit during tasks that don't require movement, promoting health and inclusivity across various industries. Is your business ready?

As the air turns colder and the holidays approach, there's some good news to talk about. Michigan's employment landscape continues to rebound, with regional job growth and strategic investments providing stability across various sectors. Our community's concerted efforts are building a stronger foundation for sustained economic progress.

Regardless of the outcome of the upcoming election, there is confidence in continued stability and growth. Businesses have shown resilience by adapting to shifting conditions, and encouraging signs like improved consumer sentiment and easing inflationary pressures point to promising opportunities ahead.

Notably, the CHIPS and Science Act is fueling a $325 million investment into Hemlock Semiconductor, creating over 1,000 jobs in engineering and manufacturing. This significant boost underscores Michigan's potential as a leader in advanced manufacturing.

We also examine the impact of Ann Arbor's new "Right to Sit" ordinance on worker well-being. Aimed at improving conditions and accessibility, it enhances morale and productivity but may impose cost burdens on businesses. Similar efforts have improved satisfaction elsewhere; Michigan's approach could model both benefits and challenges for others.

Our coverage provides insights into how different areas are contributing to economic growth through infrastructure improvements and workforce training programs. Michigan is laying the groundwork for sustained progress. At WSI Staffing and Recruitment, our goal is to help you navigate this evolving landscape and identify opportunities where your business can thrive.

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