# U.S. gains a robust 266,000 jobs in November

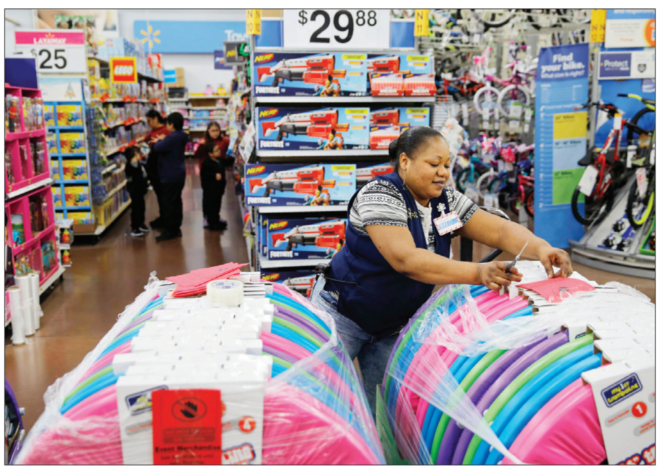
## Report shows unemployment falls to 50-year low of 3.5%

**By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Hiring in the United States jumped last month to its highest level since January, as U.S. employers shrugged off global trade conflicts and added 266,000 jobs.

The unemployment rate declined to 3.5% from 3.6% in October, matching a half-century low, the Labor Department reported Friday. And wages rose a solid 3.1% in November compared with a year earlier.

The healthy job gain runs against a widespread view that businesses are struggling to find workers with unemployment so low. Persistent hiring should help keep consumers spending — a key engine of growth — as businesses have cut their investment spending and exports have stalled.




AP Photo/John Locher

**Balo Balogun labels items in preparation for a holiday sale at a Walmart Supercenter in Las Vegas. Hiring in the United States jumped last month to its highest level since January.**

Monthly job growth has in fact accelerated since this summer, averaging 205,000 over the past three months, up from just 135,000 in July.

Steady hiring has helped reassure consumers that the economy is expanding and that their jobs and incomes remain secure, which, in turn, has helped fuel spending. Consumer spending has become an even more important driver of growth because the Trump administration's trade conflicts have reduced exports and led many businesses to cut spending.

Renewed concerns that trade will continue to hamper the U.S. economy drove stock prices lower earlier this week, after President Donald Trump said he was willing to wait until after the 2020 elections to strike a preliminary trade agreement with China. With the two sides still haggling, the administration is set to impose 15% tariffs on an additional $160 billion of Chinese imports beginning Dec. 15.

Both sides have since suggested that the negotiations are making progress, but there is still no sign of a resolution.

Hiring in the United States has remained mostly healthy this year despite the trade war. Even so, Trump's combative use of import taxes, combined with retaliatory tariffs by China and Europe, has stalled job growth in manufacturing.

Employers have been hiring at a solid enough pace to absorb new job seekers and to potentially lower the unemployment rate, though the pace of job growth is down from last year.

The holiday shopping season has begun later this year compared with previous years, a fact that some economists think might have delayed hiring by retailers and shipping firms last month.

With tariffs hobbling manufacturing, the job market this year has underscored a bifurcation in the economy: Service industries — finance, engineering, health care and the like — have been hiring at a solid pace, while manufacturers, miners and builders have been posting weak numbers.

Despite the raging trade tensions, most analysts say they remain hopeful about the economy and the job market. The economy grew at a 2.1% annual rate in the July-September quarter, and the annual pace is thought to be slowing to roughly 1.5% to 2% in the final three months of the year — sluggish but far from recessionary.

Consumer confidence has slipped in recent months but remains at a decent level, helping boost sales of expensive purchases, such as autos and appliances.

With inflation surprisingly low, the Federal Reserve has cut its benchmark short-term interest rate three times this year. Those rate cuts have helped support the housing market. Sales of existing homes have risen nearly 5% in the past year. Sales of new homes have soared by one-third.

EO Media Group file photo

**Union County restaurants, such as El Erradero Restaurant in La Grande, may have to pay higher licenses fees under a new proposal the Union County Board of Commissioners is considering.**

# Union County may increase fees for food service licenses

## CHD asks county for 15% boost to annual fees

*EO Media Group*

LA GRANDE — Union County restaurant owners may pay more for food service licenses for the first time in five years.

The Center for Human Development has asked the Union County Board of Commissioners for a 15% boost to the annual fees it charges restaurant owners for food service licenses. The CHD's request also applies to the owners of public pools and spas, and the owners of tourist facilities such as motels.

Under the proposed plan, the higher license fees to be put in effect would include $507 for a restaurant with 15 or fewer seats, and $725 for a restaurant with at least 150 seats. The food service license fee for operating a bed-and-breakfast would be $217 a year. The fees for temporarily restaurants would be $51 for a single-day event and $72 for a seasonal or multiday event. The inspection fee for tourist facilities, such as an organizational camp, would be $83, and the fee for pools and spas would be $221 for the first pool/spa and $110 for the second.

Carrie Brogoitti, public health administrator for the Center for Human Development, said CHD has not increased its food license fees since 2014. She said the increase would bring the CHD's fees up to what they would have been if CHD had increased these fees by 3% each year since 2014.

The fees cover inspections conducted by CHD to ensure these facilities are safe for the community. CHD is requesting the fee increase because of the rising costs of operating its environmental health services program, which cover food service, pool and spa and motel inspections.

"Revenues have remained flat while costs for providing environmental health services have increased approximately 5% a year," according to a written report presented to the Union County Board of Commissioners.



# Attorney General sues Johnson & Johnson over surgical implants

## The lawsuit alleges deceptive, harmful practices

**By JAKE THOMAS**
*Oregon Capital Bureau*

SALEM — Johnson & Johnson failed to disclose potential debilitating and dangerous complications posed by devices implanted in at least 3,700 women in Oregon, according to a lawsuit filed by state Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum.

The lawsuit alleges that the New Jersey-based medical and consumer goods manufacturer and its subsidiary Ethicon Inc. deceptively marketed transvaginal surgical mesh devices. The net-like devices are made from a synthetic fabric and are surgically implanted to support weakened or damaged tissue in a woman's bladder or pelvic area.

The devices are used to treat conditions that 30-50% of all women will face in their lifetimes, according to the lawsuit.

According to the lawsuit, filed Dec. 3 in Multnomah County Circuit Court, Johnson & Johnson didn't disclose to doctors and patients the potential risks of the devices that include chronic pain, urinary dysfunction, pain from sexual intercourse, disfigurement, and the inability to remove the devices. The company, instead, marketed the devices as "minimally invasive with minimal risk" and misrepresented studies regarding their safety, the lawsuit states.

"Johnson & Johnson has blatantly put profits over the health of thousands of Oregon women," said Rosenblum in a prepared statement. "If these woman and their doctors had been provided accurate information about the risks of these devices — by the company that well knew the risks — they may never have chosen to have them inserted in their bodies, resulting in all manner of painful, horrible outcomes."

The lawsuit states that some women who have had the implants have become permanently disabled, have seen their marriages suffer from the loss of physical intimacy or undergone multiple surgeries in attempts to remove the devices.

In April, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration ordered manufacturers of the devices to stop selling them for certain procedures. Last month, Johnson & Johnson agreed to pay $117 million to settle a similar lawsuit brought by 41 states and the District of Columbia.

The lawsuit doesn't specify the total amount of money the state is seeking from the company. But it asks for $25,000 for each violation of the state's Unlawful Trade Practices Act and an order halting the company from promoting surgical mesh in Oregon.

# BRIEFLY

## SCBGP is now accepting applications

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Agriculture is now accepting proposals for project ideas as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program for 2020. Approximately $1.5 million is expected to be available to agriculture industry associations, producer groups, processors, commodity commissions, nonprofits, for-profits and local government agencies in Oregon. Funding for Oregon's program is contingent upon federal funding for the SCBGP.

Specialty crops are defined as commonly recognized fruits, vegetables, tree nuts and nursery crops. Oregon ranks in the top 10 nationwide in production of specialty crops. For the 2020 SCBGP request for proposals, ODA has a single-phase process known as the grant proposal application. ODA is requesting 15-page grant proposals from applicants describing their proposed projects. Proposals should be submitted online and must be received by noon on Jan. 31.

## U.S. trade gap narrows in October

WASHINGTON — The U.S. trade deficit narrowed in October as imports fell faster than exports. The politically sensitive trade gap with China dropped.

The Commerce Department said Thursday that the gap between what America sells and what it buys abroad dropped 7.6% to $47.2 billion in October. Imports tumbled 1.7% to $254.3 billion on reduced purchases of foreign oil, cars and auto parts and pharmaceuticals. Exports dipped 0.2% to $207.1 billion on a drop in sales of soybeans and aircraft engines.

The deficit in the trade of goods with China narrowed by 1.1% to $31.3 billion in October and is down 14.6% so far this year. The goods deficit with Mexico dropped 1.4% to $8.8 billion but is up 28% so far in 2019.

Mainstream economists say the trade deficit reflects an economic reality that doesn't yield much to changes in government policy: Americans consume more than they produce, and imports fill the gap.

— *EO Media Group and wire services*