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Please consult with your tax professional before making any CARES Act-related transactions with your retirement accounts. Partnering with your tax and financial professionals can help in the decision-making process. In the meantime, stay safe, stay healthy and keep looking forward to brighter days ahead.

**PUBLISHER'S NOTE:** This article was written by Edward Jones for use by Edward Jones Financial Advisor - Sheila K. Smith, 25349 W. Newberry Road, in Newberry. Phone 352-472-2776.



## Governor criticized for allegedly ignoring farmers and ranchers

By the Communications Office of Commissioner Nikki Fried  
Published April 20, 2020 at 8:10 p.m.

**TALLAHASSEE** – Today (Monday, April 20), Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nicole “Nikki” Fried, an independently-elected member of the Florida Cabinet, issued the following statement regarding the Governor’s Re-Open Florida Task Force:

Gov. Ron DeSantis had announced a plan to create a task force related to reopening the state after the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This is sadly more of the same politics over state from the Governor. I was not asked to serve alongside my fellow Cabinet members on the task force, which has no voice on its membership representing Florida’s \$137 billion agriculture industry. That is deeply concerning given the impacts of COVID-19 on Florida’s second largest industry, and given the progress my team has made working with federal, state, local and retail partners to reduce negative impacts to Florida agriculture.

“It’s equally concerning that the Governor neglected to mention agriculture on the initial call. I hope he will join my commitment to supporting our farmers and feeding our families,” Commissioner Fried concluded.

## Region’s jobless rate climbs to 5.5 percent

### *Impact of COVID-19 just beginning*

By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC, Communications Manager  
CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion  
Published April 17, 2020 at 5:10 p.m.

**OCALA** – The unemployment rate in the CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion region was 5.5 percent in March, up 1.6 percent over the month and 1.3 percent higher than the region’s rate a year ago.

There were 11,208 unemployed, an increase of 3,252 jobless since February.

The labor force was 203,214, up 1,943 over the year, largely fueled by a spike in unemployment. There were 192,006 employed, a decrease of 857 compared to March 2019 when the region’s unemployment rate was 4.2 percent, and a drop of 3,597 over the month.

The Ocala/Marion County metropolitan statistical area posted the fastest annual job growth rate in manufacturing, at 4.4 percent, compared to all metro areas in the state.

According to the preliminary jobs report for March, released today by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Levy County had the lowest jobless rate in the state at 4.9 percent, up 1.4 percent point over the month; Marion County followed with a rate of 5.2 percent, up 1.5 percent; and Citrus County's rate was 6.6 percent, an increase of 1.8 percent. Florida's not seasonally adjusted jobless rate – a measure that matches the way local rates are calculated – is 4.3 percent, an increase of 1.5 percent over the month and up from 3.2 percent a year ago.

Rusty Skinner, CEO of CareerSource CLM, said that “there are no real surprises” in the report.

“As expected, we're beginning to see the effects of COVID-19 on our region and state. Unfortunately, this is not likely to be the full extent of it. For example, this report doesn't reflect the changes we'd expect in leisure and hospitality employment which we will no doubt see when the April numbers come out.”

Skinner added that the impact would likely have been much worse if the region hadn't been economically strong to begin with.

“I think it is important to note that the Ocala MSA posted the fastest annual job growth in manufacturing,” he said.

Skinner reiterated that CareerSource CLM continues to provide fee-free virtual services to business and those looking for work. He added that as of April 17, there are 87 businesses working with CareerSource CLM to fill positions. In addition, CareerSource CLM and other workforce development regions are working with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to assist displaced workers with Reemployment Assistance while the online CONNECT system is bogged down by unprecedented demand. Toward that end, paper applications for temporary wage benefits have been distributed at all career centers and are available for download at [careersourceclm.com](http://careersourceclm.com).

Additionally, those visiting the website during normal business hours can access staff immediately via Live Chat; phone and email options are also available. Job seekers and businesses hit by COVID-19 can also submit streamlined requests for services available on the website via COVID-19 Quick Links and Live Chat box, as well as on Candidates and Businesses pages.

Here's how each county fared in the March report:

Citrus County's labor force rose by 162 over the month to 47,881, the number of employed decreased by 727 to 44,713 and the number of unemployed rose by 889 to 3,168. Compared to March 2019, when the jobless rate was 4.9 percent, the labor force has expanded by 115, the number of employed has fallen by 714 and the number of unemployed increased by 829.

Levy County's labor force contracted by 72 to 16,887, the number of those with jobs fell by 300 to 16,067 and the number of unemployed rose by 228 to 820. That's a slight over-the-year increase of 38 in the labor force, 123 fewer working and 161 more unemployed compared to when the rate was 3.9 percent.

Marion County's labor force fell by 498 to 138,446, the number of those with jobs dropped by 2,570 to 131,226 and the number of unemployed increased 20,72 to 7,220. That's 1,790 in the labor force, 20 fewer employed and 1,810 more unemployed compared to a year ago when the county's jobless rate was 4.0 percent.

Nonfarm employment in March 2020 for the Ocala MSA was 107,800, an increase of 1,100 jobs over the year for a growth rate of 1.0 percent.

The Homosassa Springs MSA's nonfarm employment was 33,700, a decrease of 200 jobs (-0.6 percent) over the year.

In addition to manufacturing, which grew by 400 new jobs to 9,500 over the year, industries that grew faster in the metro area than statewide were mining, logging, and construction at 4.8 percent, adding 400 new jobs for a total of 8,700 employed; and government at 1.9 percent, which added 300 jobs for a total of 15,700.

Additionally, education and health services added 200 new jobs over the year and trade, transportation and utilities gained 100 and leisure and hospitality added 100 jobs.

Industries losing jobs over the year were professional business services (-200) and information (-100).

Financial services, leisure and hospitality and other services were unchanged over the year.

In March, Citrus County held the second highest unemployment rate in reclaimed the state among all 67 counties; Marion County tied with Dixie and Gulf counties with the 11th highest rate; and Levy County tied with Charlotte and Polk counties with the 18th highest rate.

Among the metro areas, the Homosassa Springs/Citrus County MSA held the



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