



Alabama Arise: State's unemployment rate drop isn't tied to immigration law

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By **Martin Swant** --- **The Birmingham News**

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- The half-percent-point decrease in Alabama's jobless rate in October isn't due to the state's tough new immigration law, but rather because many residents simply have given up looking for work, according to an analysis by **Arise Citizens' Policy Project**.

When Alabama's **unemployment rate dropped** to 9.3 percent in October from 9.8 percent in September, a sponsor of the immigration legislation said the decrease is thanks to the new law, which went into effect in September. **Alabama House Majority Leader Rep. Micky Hammon**, R-Decatur, on Friday said the law is replacing illegal immigrant labor with Alabamians.

"Despite how desperately illegal immigrant sympathizers have tried to portray this law as somehow harmful to our state's economy, the truth is more Alabamians are working today thanks in part to our decision to crackdown on illegal immigration," Hammon **said in a statement** last week after the unemployment numbers were released.

But job numbers show only a "small bump" in the data, according to **Stephen Stetson**, policy analyst for the Arise Citizens' Policy Project, which represents low-income Alabamians.

Stetson said the numbers don't account for those who have quit looking for work or who have left the state.

"Anybody looking at the unemployment rate alone to get a feel for what's happening in Alabama is making a big mistake," he said in a statement. "People who've given up on getting a job are still having a big impact on the economic landscape."

Some of the new jobs added could just be temporary hires for seasonal work, University of Alabama economist **Ahmad Ijaz** said last week. Ijaz said it's too early to tell if the immigration law had any effect on October's unemployment rate.