



ALASKA ECONOMIC  
**TRENDS**  
JANUARY 2020

**2020**  
**JOBS FORECAST**

# FROM THE COMMISSIONER

## Onward to 2020: A continued commitment to culture

By **Dr. Tamika L. Ledbetter**, Commissioner

Each year brings new opportunities as well as challenges, and as I reflect on the last year, I am proud of the work we accomplished. Department of Labor and Workforce Development staff worked diligently to align with new leadership to improve our internal communication and cooperation, allowing us to better serve Alaskans.

Each division also focused on an important aspect of any organization — culture. An organization's culture is shaped by its members' values, behaviors, attitudes, assumptions, and practices.

Leaders who intend to make sweeping changes in their organizations must first address the current culture, then develop and communicate new expectations. In state government, this can be difficult due to the hierarchical way decisions are made, often with little input from the lower-level employees who perform much of the day-to-day work. Good leaders can inspire their teams by consistently modeling their own expectations, and if they also hold their managers to the same standards, their influence on a positive new culture can be enormous.

One way we focused on culture this year was sending all senior management to a customized Executive Leadership Training Intensive where we focused on vision, professional development, team-building, communication, and trust. This training intensive strengthened our commitment to workforce development, workplace safety, legal working conditions, income replacement for injured workers, and serving the most vulnerable through employment opportunities and more. Another more specific outcome was development of our department's core values: Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Competence, and Honesty: R.E.A.C.H.

To further show my commitment to trust and better communication, I sent a follow-up letter to express my appreciation for my management team's dedication, commitment, and amazing work. I wanted them



to know I understand the difficulties they face, balancing their own workloads while directing the work of others. I also wanted to show I was invested in them by creating an environment in which they could grow as leaders and more effectively serve those they lead.

As commissioner, this year I commit to:

- Communicating respect and honesty in all my interactions
- Demonstrating excellence in my work as the chief executive and lead representative of this department
- Promoting accountability by earning and keeping the public's respect and accepting responsibility for my decisions and actions
- Displaying competence by carrying out my duties with the highest level of knowledge, skills, and abilities

I sense our culture is changing for the better. I believe staff feel more valued and respected, and I hope they understand they are vital to the department's success. While we support local economies by promoting jobs, economic stability, and growth through job training and workforce development opportunities across the state, we are also building our internal workforce through improved training, mentorship, and opportunities for advancement.

In the public and private sectors alike, these are key ways to make employees feel valued and personally connected to the services they provide. If we do this as a department, we in turn serve the public more effectively.

Contact Dr. Tamika L. Ledbetter, Commissioner, at (907) 465-2700 or [commissioner.labor@alaska.gov](mailto:commissioner.labor@alaska.gov).



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**JANUARY  
2020**

Volume 40 Number 1  
ISSN 0160-3345

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**ON THE COVER:**

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Design by Sara Whitney

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### **ALASKA**

**DEPARTMENT of LABOR  
and WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT**

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Trends is a nonpartisan, data-driven magazine  
that covers a range of economic topics in Alaska.

**ON THIS SPREAD:** The background image for 2020 is the aurora borealis in the arctic in Alaska, taken by Noel Bauza.

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# Statewide Forecast for 2020

## Slight job growth likely this year



'10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 '17 '18 '19 '20

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

By KARINNE WIEBOLD

Alaska added about 1,600 jobs in 2019 after losing more than 11,000 during the recession of the prior three years. We forecast that trend will continue this year, but at a slower rate of 0.3 percent, or about 1,100 new jobs.

While most industries' growth will be tepid, record anticipated numbers of cruise ship visitors and the first wave of new military personnel at Eielson Air Force Base in the interior will be bright spots in 2020.

## Growth is the economic default

Without significant counterpressure, growth is the default economic setting. Absent a major shock, Alaska will keep adding jobs in 2020, but a few

## Statewide outlook for jobs, by industry

	Monthly avg, 2018 <sup>1</sup>	Monthly avg, 2019 <sup>1</sup>	Change, 2018-19	Percent change	JOBS FORECAST		
					Monthly avg, 2020	Change, 2019-20	Percent change
<b>TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>327,700</b>	<b>329,300</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>330,400</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
Total Private	247,200	249,300	2,100	0.8%	251,200	1,900	0.8%
Mining and Logging	12,700	13,100	400	3.1%	13,600	500	3.8%
Oil and Gas	9,400	9,700	300	3.2%	10,100	400	4.1%
Construction	15,800	16,500	700	4.4%	16,700	200	1.2%
Manufacturing	12,600	12,800	200	1.6%	12,900	100	0.8%
Transportation, Trade, and Utilities	64,400	64,500	100	0.2%	64,700	200	0.3%
Retail Trade	35,800	35,600	-200	-0.6%	35,500	-100	-0.3%
Wholesale Trade	6,400	6,500	100	1.6%	6,500	0	0%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	22,200	22,400	200	0.9%	22,700	300	1.3%
Information	5,600	5,400	-200	-3.6%	5,300	-100	-1.9%
Financial Activities	11,700	11,600	-100	-0.9%	11,400	-200	-1.7%
Professional and Business Services	27,300	27,600	300	1.1%	27,800	200	0.7%
Educational (private) and Health Services	50,400	50,800	400	0.8%	51,200	400	0.8%
Health Care	38,000	38,400	400	1.1%	38,800	400	1.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	35,600	36,000	400	1.1%	36,500	500	1.4%
Other Services	11,100	11,000	-100	-0.9%	11,100	100	0.9%
Total Government	80,500	80,100	-400	-0.5%	79,200	-900	-1.1%
Federal, except military	14,900	14,800	-100	-0.7%	15,000	200	1.4%
State, incl. University of Alaska	23,600	23,400	-200	-0.8%	22,700	-700	-3.0%
Local and tribal, incl. public schools	42,000	41,900	-100	-0.2%	41,500	-400	-1.0%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

<sup>1</sup>Preliminary and adjusted estimates. <sup>2</sup>Excludes the self-employed, uniformed military, most commercial fishermen, domestic workers, and unpaid family workers.

conditions will keep recovery sluggish.

First, some of last year's job growth was due to temporary factors rather than true economic improvements. The biggest was the federal government injecting nearly half a billion dollars into the state to house two new squadrons of F-35 fighter planes at Eielson.

Second, Alaska's economic recovery continues to face headwinds. Ongoing population loss dampens job growth, and state government is still grappling with balancing spending and revenue.

While budget talks for fiscal year 2021 are in the early stages, the proposed budget would transfer more than \$1 billion from savings, even with the influx of nearly \$3 billion from investment earnings. This would leave Alaska with another year of dwindling savings accounts and unresolved choices about the size and role of state government, the size of the Permanent Fund Dividend, and how to pay for it all.

As we wrote early last year, all possible choices have pros and cons, and from an economic perspective, none will be cost-free. But until we make those decisions, our economy will be hampered by uncertainty. (See the February 2019 issue of *Trends*.)

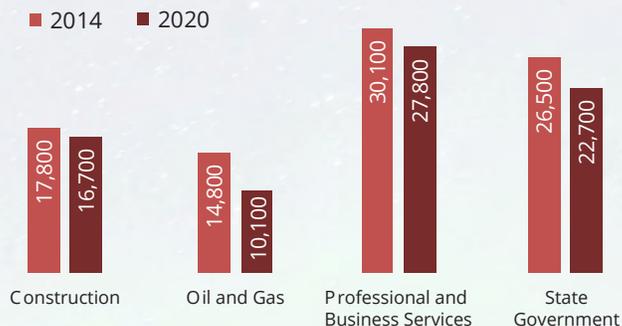
## What will drive job growth in 2020

Tourism numbers keep reaching new heights, and 2020 is expected to break another record with an anticipated 6 percent jump in cruise ship passengers. According to McDowell Group, nearly half of Alaska's visitors arrive on cruise ships, 47 percent fly, and 4 percent come by land or ferry.

Alaska remains a powerful draw for visitors, and a strong national economy means more people have the disposable income necessary for a trip north. The number of foreign tourists in the winter, many of whom travel to the interior to view the northern lights, has also grown in recent years.

The military is another positive driver. Nearly 2,500 troops from Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks deployed to Iraq in September and will begin returning in May. The deployment depressed demand at local

## Employment in key industries remains below 2014 levels



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Without significant counterpressure, growth is the default economic setting. Alaska will likely add jobs in 2020, but a few conditions will keep recovery sluggish.

restaurants, bars, and stores, and returning soldiers will stimulate eating, drinking, and shopping activity.

Eielson Air Force Base will welcome the first installment of F-35 personnel and their families early this year, infusing the Fairbanks North Star Borough with new residents — a major boost for a borough that has lost

3,500 people since its population peaked in 2012 at slightly more than 100,000 people. (See the Fairbanks forecast on page 13.)

Oil and gas will add jobs in 2020, although the sale of BP's assets to Hilcorp will likely result in at least temporary job loss, as is customary when companies restructure. In late 2019, BP reported that about half of its nearly 1,600 Alaska employees had taken jobs with Hilcorp.

## What will slow the economy in 2020

State government's financial situation remains the primary drag on Alaska's economy. Even after several years of deep budget cuts, Alaska still spends more than it brings in. Savings have bought the state time and mitigated cuts, but drawing from savings remains controversial and a short-term solution.

The state cut the University of Alaska's funding by \$25 million last year (state fiscal year 2020),

## Statewide Forecast

resulting in rapid job losses. By fall, employment had fallen by 400 from the year before. Additional cuts are likely over the next few years.

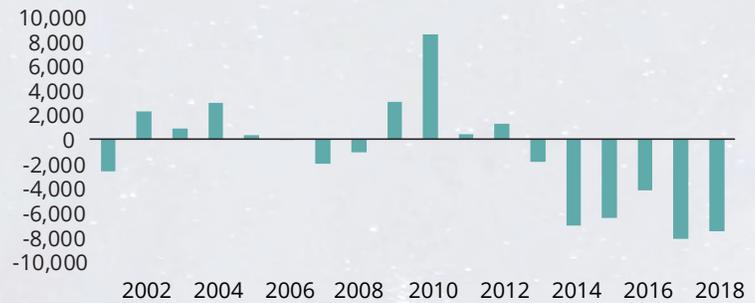
The Alaska Marine Highway System, a network of ferries serving southeast, southwest, and southcentral coastal towns, took a huge hit in 2019. Ferry service to a number of communities has been significantly reduced, and some places, such as Cordova, have lost winter service.

The effects on small, isolated communities will be far-reaching. Reduced ferry service may boost private transportation companies as communities such as Angoon look to charter boats and small aircraft to meet critical transportation needs, but the costs of living and working in these places will increase.

Finally, population loss remains an ongoing issue. After growing for nearly 30 years, Alaska's total population declined for a second year in a row in 2018 when natural increase (births minus deaths) was no longer able to offset net migration losses.

Alaska has the largest migration rates of any state — every year, between 35,000 and 50,000 people both to and from Alaska — but for the last six years, the state has lost more movers than it's gained. Fewer Alaskans means less demand for schools, stores, homes, and services.

## More people have left Alaska than arrived for six straight years



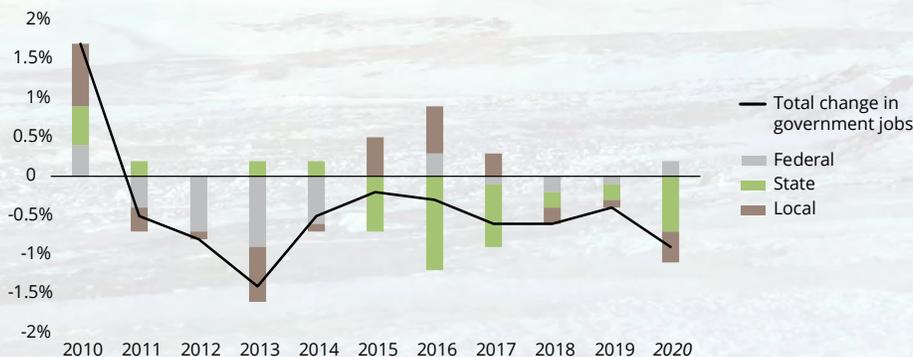
**Note:** Shows net migration, or in-migrants minus out-migrants.  
**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## A look at forecasted growth and loss by private industry

Most of Alaska's industries are forecasted to grow in 2020, at least a little. Tourism will bolster a handful of related industries, from leisure and hospitality (which includes eating and drinking as well as accommodations) to retail, transportation, and the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry.

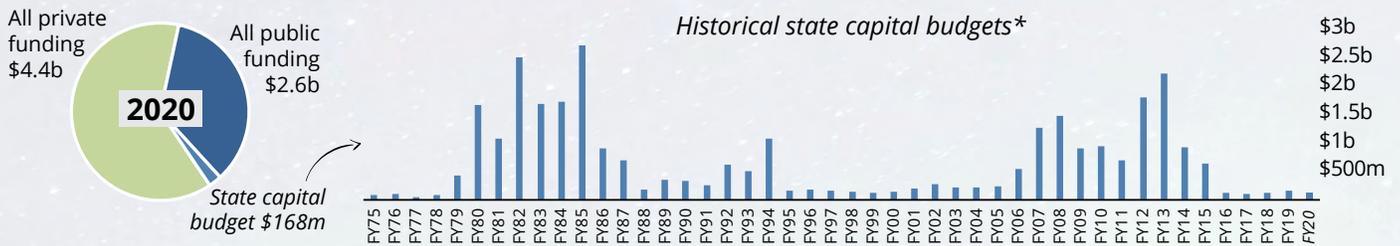
We forecast 100 additional jobs for mining over the next year as existing mines operate and expand. A number of new projects around the state are possible, but it's too soon to incorporate them into the 2020 job forecast. These include Pebble in the southwest, which continues to progress through regulatory requirements, and explorations in Haines, near the existing Red Dog Mine, and in the interior.

## Government jobs continue decade-long decline



**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

# Capital budgets and share of total construction funding shrinking



\*2019 dollars. Sources: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Alaska's Construction Spending Forecast 2019; and Alaska Division of Legislative Finance

(See the metal mining article in the May 2019 issue of *Trends*.)

Despite a dip in oil prices (averaging \$65 per barrel in 2019 versus \$71 the year before), we expect the oil industry will continue growing, adding 400 jobs in 2020 after gaining 300 last year. The biggest variable is Hilcorp's assumption of BP's North Slope assets in early 2020, which will probably cause some job loss, mainly in Anchorage. (See the Anchorage forecast on page 10 for more.)

Health care, historically a major source of growth, is forecasted to add a modest 400 jobs in 2020. Hospitals and ambulatory health care continue to expand, but at a slower rate. Nursing homes and group homes, on the other hand, have been losing jobs for several years and the losses are accelerating.

Alaska's population is aging faster than the nation's, and with age comes additional health care needs. This will spur some growth in the industry, but recent cuts to Medicaid, with more looming, will mute health care growth.

Some of the industry's recent job growth is a reclassification of existing jobs from local government to private health care through the City of Sitka's recent sale of its community hospital to the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, or SEARHC.

Construction is forecasted to add 200 jobs in 2020, but there's little activity on the horizon. New home construction has slowed in recent years, falling from 4,774 new units in 2004 to 1,659 in 2018. For a

while, there was talk of new housing demand from the Eielson expansion, but with high vacancy rates in the Fairbanks area and its population down, that talk has quieted.

The Army Corp of Engineers' spending in Alaska will drop precipitously this year, from \$640 million in fiscal year 2019 to \$310 million: a 52 percent cut. State government's FY 2020 capital budget was also down, reducing state spending on construction projects, although the governor has proposed a slightly higher capital budget for fiscal year 2021.

The impact of state capital spending on overall construction spending has varied greatly over the years, as the chart above shows. State investment in facilities and infrastructure topped \$2 billion as recently as 2013, but in 2019 it was a tiny fraction of public construction spending, dwarfed by federal contributions. (For more on the construction industry, see the December 2019 issue of *Trends*.)

After growing for nearly 30 years, Alaska's population fell in recent years when natural increase could no longer offset net migration losses.

Professional and business services includes professional, scientific, and technical services (nearly half of its employment); management of companies and enterprises (10 percent); and administrative support and waste management (around 40 percent). This sector lost nearly 3,000 jobs during the recession, then resumed growing in 2019, adding 300 jobs. We forecast 200 additional jobs for 2020.

Transportation, warehousing, and utilities is forecasted to add 300 jobs in 2020, but a significant chunk of the gain will be through the sale of Anchorage's Municipal Light and Power to Chugach Electric Association, which will simply move jobs

## Statewide Forecast

from local government to the private utilities sector. Transportation will account for the additional growth, mostly through increased tourism, but reduced ferry service might also increase demand as coastal residents seek travel alternatives.

The retail, information, and financial activities industries will continue losing jobs in 2020. All three are subject to the cumulative effects of our recent state recession as well as national trends.

The internet continues to alter the employment landscape. Online retail is reducing local demand across the country, newspapers and radio stations are losing jobs as technology changes, and financial activities employment is falling as more services become accessible online.

### Major losses on the horizon for state and local government

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Government employment will decline considerably again in 2020. State government will take the biggest hit, shedding a forecasted 700 jobs over the year, but it could be more. We forecast a loss of 400 for local government, although that's a more complex story, as we will explain below. Federal government will add 200 jobs, mostly through temporary positions conducting the decennial census.

State government employment has fallen every year since 2015. From its high in 2014 through 2019, state government lost 3,100 jobs, as shown on page 6.

Big funding cuts to the university last year have already eliminated jobs, and those cuts are still fresh as the next round approaches. In addition, the marine highway system significantly cut its ferry workforce after a major budget hit last year.

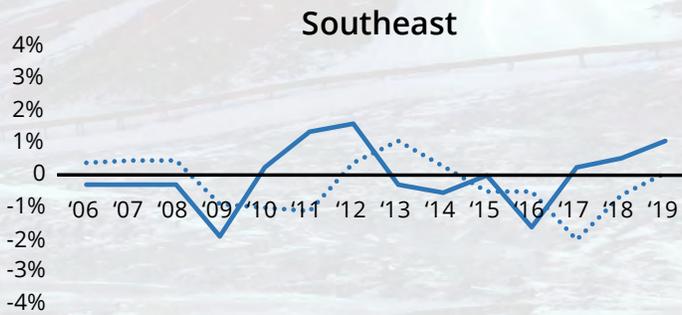
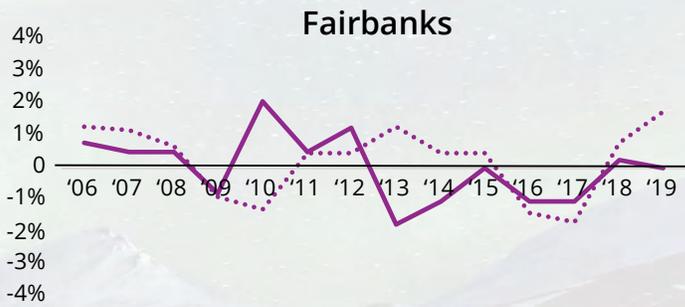
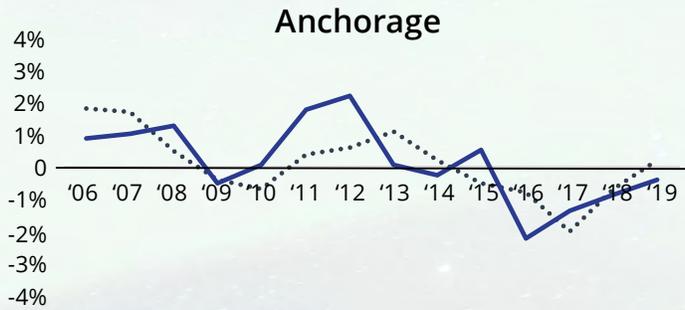
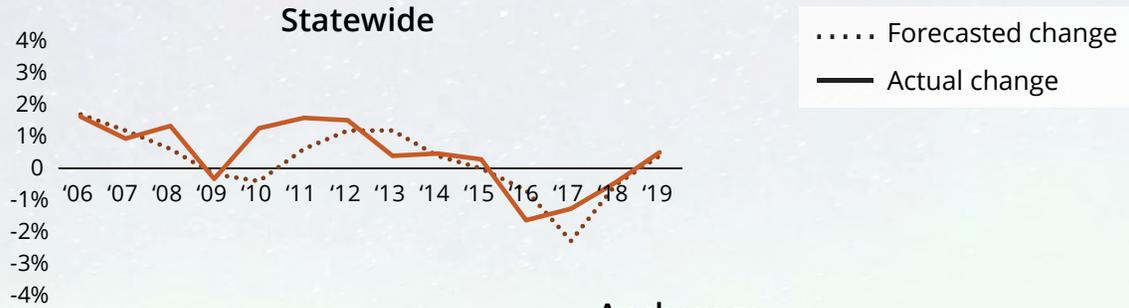
State government employment in the second half of 2020 is more uncertain, as the fiscal year 2021 budget remains far from final. The recently released governor's budget proposes essentially flat spending with high expectations for the Permanent Fund Dividend payout. The proposal hinges on drawing down three-quarters of the constitutional budget reserve, and opinions differ on whether the state should take that approach.

While local government will lose about 400 forecasted jobs, most of those will simply move to the private sector, as mentioned earlier, so they won't be a true loss. Local government employment continued to grow during the first two years of the recession, but started to drop in 2018. That trend will continue in 2020 with a forecasted loss of about 100 jobs after accounting for the private sales in Anchorage and Sitka.

Despite federal employment falling nearly every year for the last decade, we forecast a modest gain this year as temporary census workers canvas the state, starting in Toksook Bay on Jan. 21. While the census is modernizing and collecting more data online, in-person enumeration is necessary in Alaska's remote communities where internet access is limited and additional resources are required to get an accurate count.

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# How our job forecasts have panned out in recent years



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

# Anchorage Forecast for 2020

By NEAL FRIED

**A**lthough Alaska emerged from its longest recession to date in the last quarter of 2018, Anchorage's path to recovery has been slower. The recession lingered in the city, but with losses diminishing each year.

Anchorage's total job count didn't move a lot in 2019, and there's no reason to think the city's economic landscape will change much in 2020. We expect Anchorage's broad trends to continue, with total employment staying essentially flat.

## Reasons Anchorage has been on and will stay on a slower path to recovery

The oil industry, retail, and cuts to the University of Alaska Anchorage are the main reasons Anchorage continued to struggle while the state began to recover. The city was hit with a series of store closures in 2019, and oil patch employment resumed growing in 2018, although the job gains have been concentrated on the North Slope.

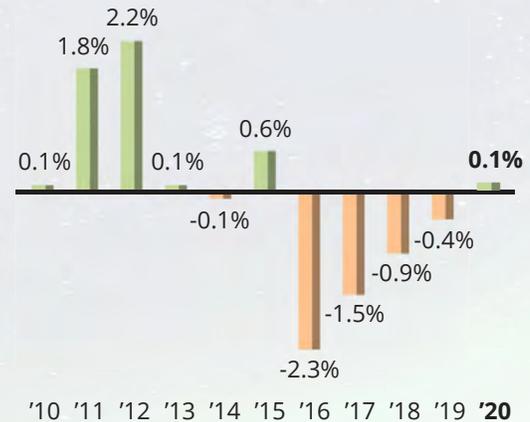
These factors will continue to play a role this year, and a few others further muddy Anchorage's forecast. One is the sale of BP to Hilcorp, and the other is the sale of Municipal Light and Power to Chugach Electric, both scheduled for the first half of 2020 and perhaps extending into the third quarter for Hilcorp. Together, these entities employ more than 2,000 people and, at least in the short term, these purchases are likely to cause some job loss.

Anchorage's long stretch of modest population loss, which we anticipate will continue in 2020, is another obstacle to growth. The city's population peaked at 301,034 in 2013 and then fell nearly every year, to 295,365 in 2018, the most recent year available. While the losses are small, they translate into less consumer demand and a softer real estate market.

## The sale of BP to Hilcorp is especially relevant to Anchorage's outlook

Alaska's oil industry is positioned for another good year. ConocoPhillips, Oil Search, and other

## Jobs essentially flat this year



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

producers have plans for a busy 2020, oil prices are up compared to 2015-2017, and employment continues to grow. As the industry's headquarters, Anchorage is likely to benefit. But there's one Anchorage-specific wrinkle: the sale of BP to Hilcorp.

The sale is anticipated to cause a net loss of jobs that's likely to hit the headquarters workforce harder than those in the field. We don't yet know the final numbers, but at the end of 2019, BP announced that about half of nearly 1,600 workers in Alaska had taken jobs with Hilcorp, and about 300 would likely remain with BP and leave the state.

## A major construction project ends, but smaller ones are on horizon

Construction employment in Anchorage turned positive in 2018 and grew throughout 2019, although the gains got smaller as the year progressed. Given that trend and the currently known list of projects for 2020, construction's growth forecast is modest. This is also the fifth straight year of increasingly bare bones capital budgets. (See the statewide forecast.)

Office projects in Anchorage look scarce, and vacancy is still climbing for nearly all types of vertical construction, public and private. With the Midtown Mall's reconstruction complete, the horizon is

# Outlook for jobs in Anchorage, by industry

	Monthly avg, 2018 <sup>1</sup>	Monthly avg, 2019 <sup>1</sup>	Change, 2018-19	Percent change	JOBS FORECAST		
					Monthly avg, 2020	Change, 2019-20	Percent change
<b>TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>150,800</b>	<b>150,300</b>	<b>-500</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>	<b>150,500</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>0.1%</b>
Total Private	123,200	123,000	-200	-0.2%	123,600	600	0.5%
Mining and Logging	2,600	2,700	100	3.8%	2,500	-200	-8.0%
Oil and Gas	2,500	2,600	100	4.0%	2,400	-200	-8.3%
Construction	7,500	7,700	200	2.7%	7,900	200	2.5%
Manufacturing	2,000	2,100	100	5.0%	2,100	0	0%
Transportation, Trade, and Utilities	33,100	32,700	-400	-1.2%	32,500	-200	-0.6%
Wholesale Trade	4,800	4,900	100	2.1%	5,000	100	2.0%
Retail Trade	17,000	16,600	-400	-2.4%	16,200	-400	-2.5%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	11,300	11,200	-100	-0.9%	11,300	100	0.9%
Information	3,400	3,200	-200	-5.9%	3,100	-100	-3.2%
Financial Activities	7,300	7,200	-100	-1.4%	7,200	0	0%
Professional and Business Services	17,500	17,600	100	0.6%	17,900	300	1.7%
Educational (private) and Health Services	26,700	26,800	100	0.4%	27,100	300	1.1%
Health Care	20,900	20,800	-100	-0.5%	21,000	200	1.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	17,400	17,600	200	1.1%	17,900	300	1.7%
Other Services	5,600	5,400	-200	-3.6%	5,400	0	0%
Total Government	27,600	27,300	-300	-1.1%	26,900	-400	-1.5%
Federal, except military	8,300	8,300	0	0%	8,500	200	2.4%
State, incl. University of Alaska	9,900	9,800	-100	-1.0%	9,500	-300	-3.2%
Local and tribal, incl. public schools	9,400	9,200	-200	-2.1%	8,900	-300	-3.4%

**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section  
<sup>1</sup>Preliminary and adjusted estimates. <sup>2</sup>Excludes the self-employed, uniformed military, most commercial fishermen, domestic workers, and unpaid family workers.

devoid of large new retail projects. However, construction of a new Courtyard Hotel is scheduled to begin in 2020 after the initial, partially built project was destroyed in a fire, and a handful of significant air cargo projects are planned at the airport.

The story is similar for new residential housing, with permits at a near-record low over the first 11 months of 2019 and a repeat likely this year. New permits stood at 316 through November 2019 compared to 398 for the same period in 2018.

Highway construction, which is largely federally funded, continues to look positive. During the past two years, many Anchorage contractors were involved in preparations to house new F-35s at Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks, but this construction is winding down.

Anchorage School District's proposed \$83 million bond proposal, if approved by voters in April, could be a boost this year because much of that money would go to earthquake and other repair work.

## Retail will continue to shrink, but there are a few bright spots

Retail has lost jobs in Anchorage every year since

2015, when it peaked at 18,100. The forecasted 2.5 percent loss would put Anchorage's retail employment near its 1998 level.

The recession took its toll, but the "Amazon effect" is doing even more damage. Even at the national level, with the economy booming, retail is losing ground as e-commerce continues to make inroads, which it will do for years to come.

The biggest loss in 2019 was the September closure of Nordstrom, which employed about 200 people. In early 2020, both Pier 1 Import stores will close. On a positive note, Carrs-Safeway opened a new store in November 2019 in the Midtown Mall and hired nearly 130 people.

## Professional services stabilize with a better oil, construction outlook

The multi-year slowdown in construction, oil, and mining exploration took a big bite out of the professional services in Anchorage that support these industries. Architectural, engineering, environmental and other consulting services are a major part of the professional and business services sector, and they've sustained three years of major losses.

## Anchorage Forecast

Employment finally stabilized in 2019, and we forecast it will grow modestly in 2020, due primarily to the positive outlook for construction and oil.

### Visitor seasons continue to break records

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The number of visitors to Alaska has grown for five years straight. With the strong national economy, the cruise industry predicts a 6 percent increase in passengers to Alaska in 2020. Convention traffic also looks positive, as the Alaska Federation of Natives' annual conference will be back in Anchorage this year and next year. This is good news for a number of industries, including leisure and hospitality, which hit record employment in Anchorage in 2019.

Restaurants and bars represent two-thirds of this industry's jobs, accommodations — mostly hotels — are another fifth, and the balance is in entertainment. Locals and tourists both drive demand, with local consumption the larger stimulus.

Accommodations employment has grown over the past two years and is forecasted to continue expanding in 2020, based on strong visitor seasons and more business-related travel. Two new hotels opened in 2019 and another is likely to open in late 2020 or early 2021.

The picture is slightly more muted for restaurants and bars, which generate nearly 12,000 jobs. Employment peaked in 2016, then dropped slightly in 2017 as consumers tightened their spending, but stabilized in 2018 and grew modestly in 2019.

We forecast modest growth again in 2020. This industry is competitive and constantly in flux, with eateries regularly leaving and entering the scene. For example, Anchorage's longstanding venerable eateries Romano's and Villa Nova closed their doors in 2019 but Mat-Su Brewing Company, Raising Cane, Tent City Taphouse, and several others have recently opened or plan to open this year.

### Little change in the financial sector

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Anchorage's financial sector looks solid this year. It

includes real estate and related businesses, banks and credit unions, insurance companies, property management, and brokerage houses.

While home sales were down slightly through September 2019 (2,797 compared to 2,854 in 2018), home prices are stable, interest rates and foreclosures remain low, and the market looks about the same as the year before, on an average day.

### Health care flat, not likely to remain the boon it's been for many years

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Health care is Anchorage's largest private sector employer, and more than half the state's health care jobs are in the city. Health care generated the largest number of new jobs each year for a long time — until 2019.

Employment dipped slightly overall last year, with small increases in hospitals and ambulatory care such as doctors' and dentists' offices, but nursing and residential care jobs declined enough to stall the industry's growth.

Alaska's oil industry is positioned for another good year, but there's one Anchorage-specific wrinkle: the sale of BP to Hilcorp.

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The reasons aren't clear. It could be a temporary trend, but population loss is one possibility and saturation is another. Health care is a larger slice of Anchorage's economy than the nation's, so the supply of services might have caught up with demand. On the downside, that would mean the city could no longer rely on health care as a strong source of new jobs in the coming years.

### Transportation industry's pattern likely to mimic that of the economy

---

Because so many businesses depend on transportation, the overall health of the economy is the best predictor of this industry's future. The forecast calls for little change in the overall economy, and transportation looks similar. Its employment dipped modestly in 2019, with air passenger traffic up some and international air cargo down.

Another strong visitor season bodes well for air passenger traffic. A number of Anchorage passenger carriers will add flights this summer, and Eurowings

Continued on page 22

# Fairbanks Forecast for 2020

By SARA TEEL

The Fairbanks North Star Borough began adding jobs again in 2018 after five years of mostly losses. Employment was flat in 2019, and we forecast growth will resume in 2020. The expected gain is modest at 300 jobs, or 0.8 percent, with government declines depressing the borough's overall job growth.

Most industries held steady in 2019 as Alaska began to pull out of the recession, and several made small gains. Most of the growth was in industries tied to the military, oil and gas projects, or the busy fire-fighting season.

Counter to expectations, noticeable construction growth from preparations to house two squadrons of F-35 Lightning II fighter jets at Eielson Air Force Base did not materialize for Fairbanks, as companies from outside the borough held many of those contracts. However, the Fairbanks economy benefited in other ways from the increased activity, and that will continue in 2020.

Resumed population growth is one of those benefits, as the F-35s' arrival and Fort Wainwright troop returns from deployment will increase the borough's population in the coming years.

## Population growth set to resume with F-35 arrival, troop returns

Coinciding with its years of job losses, the borough has lost population in every year but one since 2013,

## Modest job growth this year



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

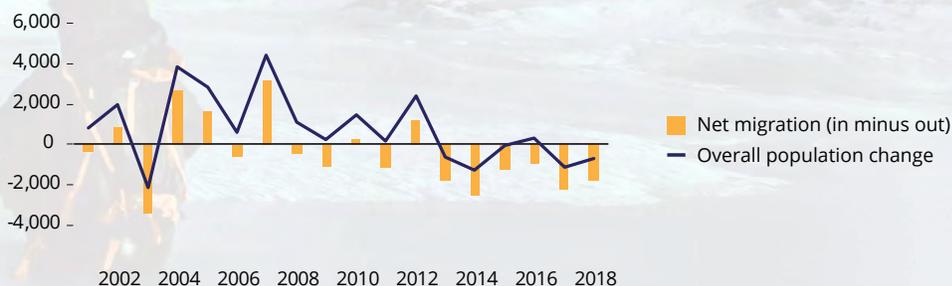
a trend that's likely to change over the next few years. New F-35 personnel and their families will begin to arrive in April, and Eielson expects more than 1,300 additional active duty personnel by 2022. This will also bring in more federal civilian employees, technical consultants, and their families.

The nearly 2,500 Fort Wainwright soldiers deployed to Iraq last summer and early fall will also begin to return in May or June.

## Tourism, military growth will bolster several industries

Retail is forecasted to increase by 100 jobs, or 2.1 percent, in 2020. Leisure and hospitality is also expected to gain 100 jobs, or 2.2 percent. Local

## More people have been leaving the borough than moving in



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## Outlook for jobs in the Fairbanks area, by industry

	Monthly avg, 2018 <sup>1</sup>	Monthly avg, 2019 <sup>1</sup>	Change, 2018-19	Percent change	JOBS FORECAST		
					Monthly avg, 2020	Change, 2019-20	Percent change
<b>TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>37,700</b>	<b>37,700</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>38,000</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
Total Private	27,200	27,100	-100	-0.4%	27,600	500	1.8%
Mining and Logging (includes oil)	800	800	0	0%	800	0	0%
Construction	2,800	2,700	-100	-3.6%	2,700	0	0%
Manufacturing	600	600	0	0%	600	0	0%
Transportation, Trade, and Utilities	7,700	7,700	0	0%	7,800	100	1.3%
Wholesale Trade	600	600	0	0%	600	0	0%
Retail Trade	4,700	4,700	0	0%	4,800	100	2.1%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	2,400	2,400	0	0%	2,400	0	0%
Information	400	400	0	0%	400	0	0%
Financial Activities	1,300	1,300	0	0%	1,300	0	0%
Professional and Business Services	2,600	2,700	100	3.8%	2,800	100	3.6%
Educational (private) and Health Services	5,600	5,600	0	0%	5,600	0	0%
Health Care	4,200	4,200	0	0%	4,300	100	2.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,500	4,500	0	0%	4,600	100	2.2%
Other Services	1,000	1,000	0	0%	1,000	0	0%
Total Government	10,500	10,600	100	1.0%	10,400	-200	-1.9%
Federal, except military	3,000	3,100	100	3.3%	3,200	100	3.1%
State, incl. University of Alaska	4,600	4,600	0	0%	4,300	-300	-7.0%
Local and tribal, incl. public schools	2,900	2,900	0	0%	2,900	0	0%

**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section  
<sup>1</sup>Preliminary and adjusted estimates. <sup>2</sup>Excludes the self-employed, uniformed military, most commercial fishermen, domestic workers, and unpaid family workers.

consumption will increase as the population grows, and tourism in Fairbanks has been strong. Bed tax receipts in the borough have increased every year since 2015 and have jumped 21 percent since 2009.

The biggest drivers will be the F-35s and the soldiers' return from Iraq. In addition to direct job growth, this population increase will boost local businesses such as stores, restaurants, and bars.

### Oil and mining grow modestly, boost professional services

Oil and gas activity on the North Slope has increased moderately since mid-2018, and at least one major project is scheduled to come online by 2021: ConocoPhillips' Greater Moose's Tooth 2.

The mining industry is also exploring in neighboring regions, spending 16 percent more on exploration from 2017 to 2018. We expect this trend to continue in 2020.

### Fairbanks' 65-plus age group has grown significantly each year



**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

The professional and business services industry can be a harbinger of upcoming economic activity because it encompasses the technical consultants, legal services, and business support necessary for such projects.

The industry has grown over the last several years,  
 Continued on page 22

# Southeast Forecast for 2020

By SARA TEEL

Southeast began to lose jobs in 2013, more than two years before the statewide recession began, then resumed growing marginally in 2017.

While the region's employment increased 1.1 percent in 2019, 2020's forecasted growth is a scant 0.3 percent, or about 100 jobs. This year brings additional obstacles to Southeast, including further cuts to state government and reduced ferry service.

Most of last year's job growth came from another record-breaking tourist season. Transportation grew the most, with the bulk of its gains in scenic and sightseeing transportation. Two other industries added about 100 jobs each: mining and logging, and private educational and health services.

For 2020, most of the forecasted growth is in retail, transportation, and health care.

## Job growth to slow this year



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## Ferry reductions a major blow for region

Ferry reductions began in 2019, and while the ferry's workforce has already been cut, its impact will

## Outlook for jobs in Southeast, by industry

	Monthly avg, 2018 <sup>1</sup>	Monthly avg, 2019 <sup>1</sup>	Change, 2018-19	Percent change	JOBS FORECAST		
					Monthly avg, 2020	Change, 2019-20	Percent change
<b>TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>36,700</b>	<b>37,100</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>37,200</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
Total Private	24,100	24,600	500	2.1%	24,900	300	1.2%
Mining and Logging	1,000	1,100	100	10.0%	1,100	0	0%
Construction	1,300	1,300	0	0%	1,300	0	0%
Manufacturing	1,800	1,800	0	0%	1,700	-100	-5.9%
Transportation, Trade, and Utilities	7,300	7,500	200	2.7%	7,700	200	2.6%
Retail Trade	4,200	4,200	0	0%	4,300	100	2.3%
Information	500	500	0	0%	500	0	0%
Financial Activities	1,100	1,100	0	0%	1,100	0	0%
Professional and Business Services	1,600	1,600	0	0%	1,600	0	0%
Educational (private) and Health Services	4,100	4,200	100	2.4%	4,400	200	4.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,300	4,300	0	0%	4,300	0	0%
Other Services	1,200	1,200	0	0%	1,200	0	0%
Total Government	12,600	12,500	-100	-0.8%	12,300	-200	-1.6%
Federal, except military	1,500	1,500	0	0%	1,500	0	0%
State, incl. University of Alaska	4,800	4,800	0	0%	4,700	-100	-2.1%
Local and tribal, incl. public schools	6,300	6,200	-100	-1.6%	6,100	-100	-1.6%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

<sup>1</sup>Preliminary and adjusted estimates. <sup>2</sup>Excludes the self-employed, uniformed military, most commercial fishermen, domestic workers, and unpaid family workers.

## Southeast Forecast

continue to ripple through the region's economy.

Some places have been hit especially hard, such as Cordova, which lost winter service. But limited ferry service will raise costs for most communities, impacting a range of local industries as they have a harder time getting supplies and finding or keeping staff.

Difficulty accessing services such as health care or veterinary care will become more common, which will affect more than just the residents and their own towns. Travel cutbacks will spread to other places in Alaska where remote coastal residents would typically go for services.

The change will likely increase jobs somewhat in other industries, however, as demand grows for air and water transportation alternatives.

### Population loss and an older population are continuing factors

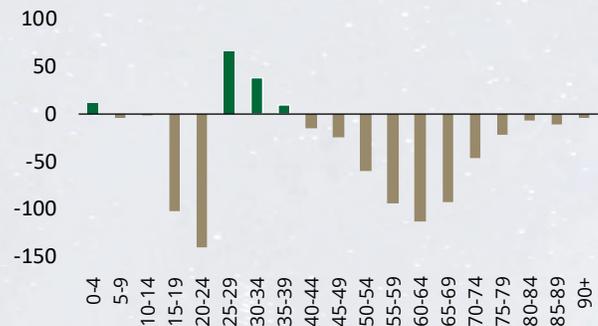
Southeast's migration losses date back to 2013. From 2013 to 2018, the region's net migration — in-movers minus out-movers — was negative for almost all age groups. As the chart above shows, the 25-to-39 group was the biggest exception.

Southeast has been the state's oldest region for decades, and both trends have long-term consequences for the job market. As baby boomers continue to retire and people leave the state, fewer Southeast residents will be available to fill vacated jobs.

### Fisheries appear to be in for a rough year

Volatility is a constant for Alaska fisheries, and some fisheries face unfavorable conditions in 2020. The forecast for the 2020 pink salmon run in Southeast is weak, the International Pacific Halibut Commission predicts three years of low halibut catches, and for the first time, the federal cod fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska will be closed due to collapsed stocks. Counter to the loss of cod stocks, however, there have been abnormally large numbers of juvenile sablefish, which is promising for future Southeast fisheries.

## From 2013 to 2018, Southeast lost people in most age groups



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

While fishermen are not included in these employment estimates because they're usually self-employed, fluctuations in fisheries create a domino effect in associated industries such as seafood processing and those tied to consumer spending.

### Manufacturing will take a hit from fisheries woes, ferry reductions

The lion's share of manufacturing in Southeast is seafood processing. Employment peaked in 2015 and has declined since, as shown in the graph on the next page, exacerbated by an administrative reporting change in 2016.

Shipyards jobs have also fallen. The Ketchikan shipyard depends on contract work with the Alaska Marine Highway system, and ferry cuts will take a continuing toll, leading to a forecasted 5.9 percent loss of about 100 manufacturing jobs this year.

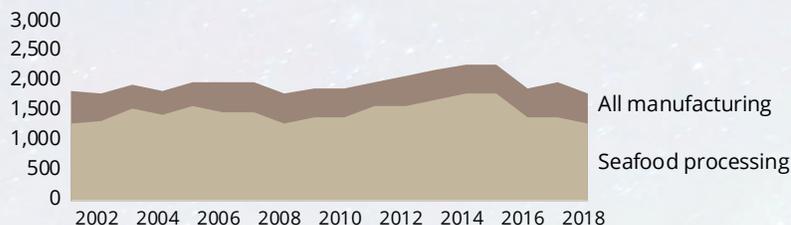
Tourism is at the heart of many Southeast communities. Reliably strong visitor seasons helped keep the region afloat during the recent state recession.

### Tourism set to break another record, and Hoonah jumps in with both feet

Tourism is at the heart of many Southeast communities. The revenue it generates creates jobs and feeds other industries, and reliably strong tourism seasons helped keep Southeast afloat during the recent state recession.

The number of cruise ship passengers has hit a

## Southeast seafood processing jobs drop



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

record in each of the last four years, and 2020's number is forecasted at 6 percent above 2019. Ten additional ships are scheduled to visit Alaska in 2020, with 29 added port calls.

The most popular destinations are Juneau, Ketchikan, and Skagway, but Hoonah is significantly expanding and expects its number of passengers to double over the next two years. Hoonah will have built a second dock by this summer for megaships, complete with a gondola system designed to transport 5,600 people per hour.

With a booming tourist season in the works, a number of related industries are forecasted to grow. We expect the transportation, trade, and utilities sector to add 200 jobs, or 2.6 percent. Jobs associated with buses, trams, fishing or whale watching excursions, and helicopters will drive transportation job growth. Retail's growth forecast is 2.3 percent, or 100 jobs.

### Budget cuts remain an Achilles heel due to high share of jobs in government

Government has played a vital role in Southeast's economy for decades, and not just because Juneau is the state capital. Government also provides an outsized percentage of jobs in smaller Southeast communities.

In 2019, 34 percent of Southeast's jobs were in the public sector. That percentage is forecasted to drop to 33 in 2020 — a loss of 200 jobs, or about 1.6 percent — mainly due to ongoing state budget struggles.

While federal jobs are expected to remain flat, local and state government jobs are forecasted to decline by 100 each: a 1.6 percent loss for local and a 2.1 percent decline for state.

Multiple state departments face cuts again this year. State government employment includes the University of Alaska Southeast, which faces another budget cut, although it won't materialize until the coming school year. The tentative \$3.6 million reduction would affect the main campus in Juneau plus UA satellite campuses across the state.

Local government's decline is tied to health care, although it's mainly a reclassification from government to the private sector. In mid-2019, Sitka Community Hospital merged with SEARHC, the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. As a result, the educational and health services sector, which is mainly health care, will gain about 100 merger-related jobs plus 100 forecasted jobs, for total growth of 4.5 percent.

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### Reconciling Southeast's job growth with the losses we've published in recent years

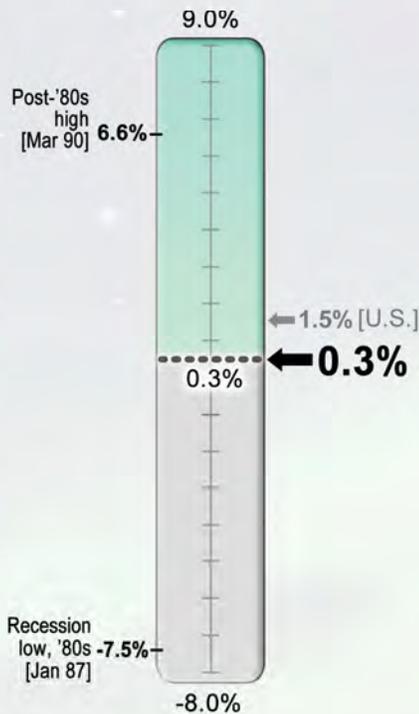
Readers of *Trends* and our monthly jobs/unemployment rate press releases may wonder why this issue shows several years of modest job growth for Southeast when we've been publishing small but fairly consistent losses over the last few years. The initial numbers are estimates based on a survey of a small sample of the region's employers. Later, when more complete information becomes available through reports that nearly all employers are required to file under state unemployment insurance laws, we revise the estimates and publish data closer to an actual count. The data become more reliable with time, and the modest growth shown here reflects our best and most current data on Southeast's performance. In this case, the revisions have been small — but just a few tenths of a percentage point can change the picture from loss to growth.

# Gauging The Economy



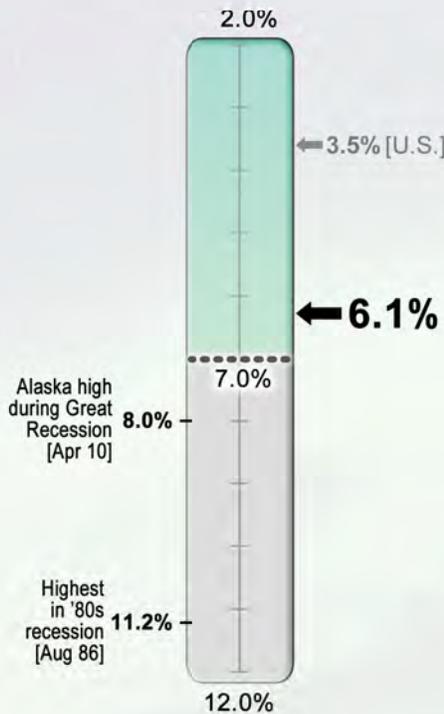
## Job Growth

November 2019  
Over-the-year percent change



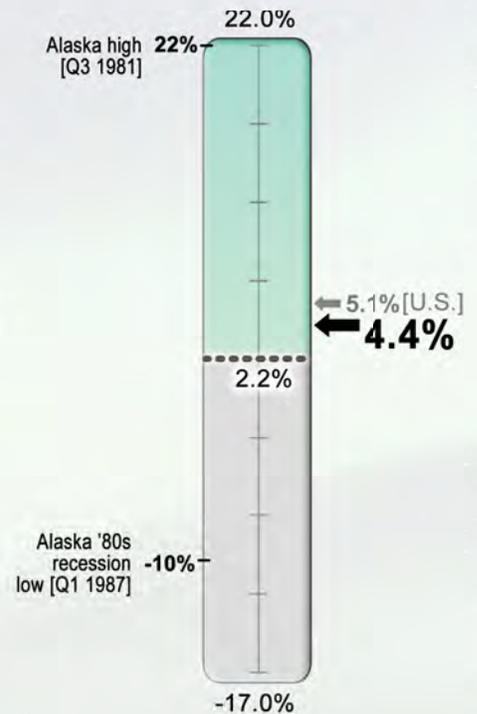
## Unemployment Rate

November 2019  
Seasonally adjusted



## Wage Growth

2nd Quarter 2019  
Over-the-year percent change

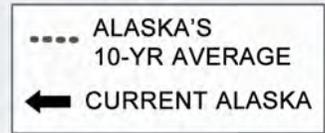


- The state has registered over-the-year job gains for 14 straight months after losing jobs for the prior three years.
- The gains are small so far, hovering around half a percentage point.
- U.S. job growth remains stable and has been positive since 2010, with the strongest growth in 2015.

- Until April, Alaska's seasonally adjusted rate had spent nearly a year at 6.5 percent.
- Unemployment rates are complicated economic measures and generally less telling than job or wage growth as indicators of broad economic health.

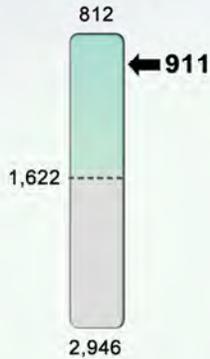
- Wages increased for the seventh straight quarter, and the strongest growth over that period was in 4th quarter 2018.
- Alaska's wage growth rate was slightly below the nation's, but both remained strong, growing at about the same rate from first to second quarter.

# Gauging The Economy



## Initial Claims

Unemployment, week ending Dec. 14, 2019\*\*

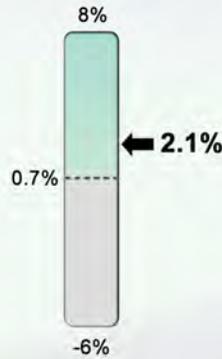


➤ For a variety of reasons, initial claims are well below the 10-year average.

\*\*Four-week moving average ending with the specified week

## GDP Growth

2nd Quarter 2019  
Over-the-year percent change\*

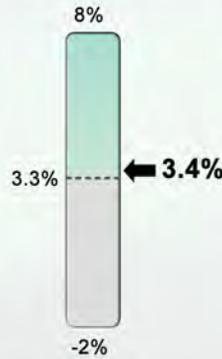


➤ Gross domestic product is the value of the goods and services a state produces. Alaska's GDP has grown for the last 11 quarters after declining for 15 out of the prior 16.

\*In current dollars

## Personal Income Growth

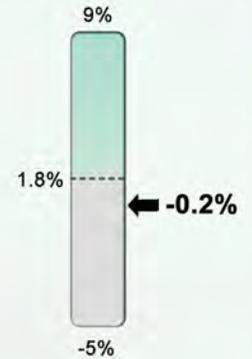
3rd Quarter 2019  
Over-the-year percent change



➤ Personal income includes wages as well as transfer payments (such as Social Security, Medicaid, and the PFD) and investment income. After five quarters well above the 10-year average, growth has slowed to average.

## Change in Home Prices

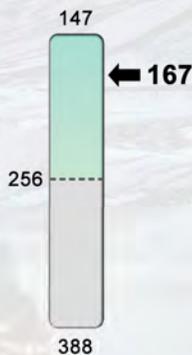
Single-family, 2nd Qtr 2019  
Over-the-year percent change



➤ Home prices include only those for which a commercial loan was used. This indicator tends to be volatile from quarter to quarter.

## Foreclosures

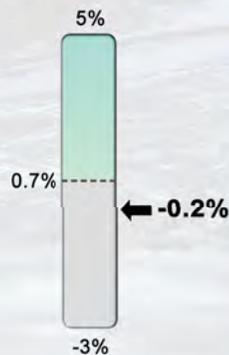
2nd Quarter 2019



➤ Foreclosure rates remain low, highlighting how different the state's recent recession was from the '80s recession when foreclosure rates exceeded 2,000 in some quarters.

## Population Growth

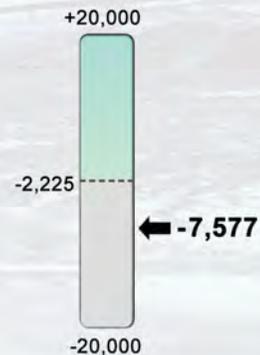
2017 to 2018



➤ The state's population has remained mostly stable during the state's recession, although 2018 was only the second year of population declines since 1988.

## Net Migration

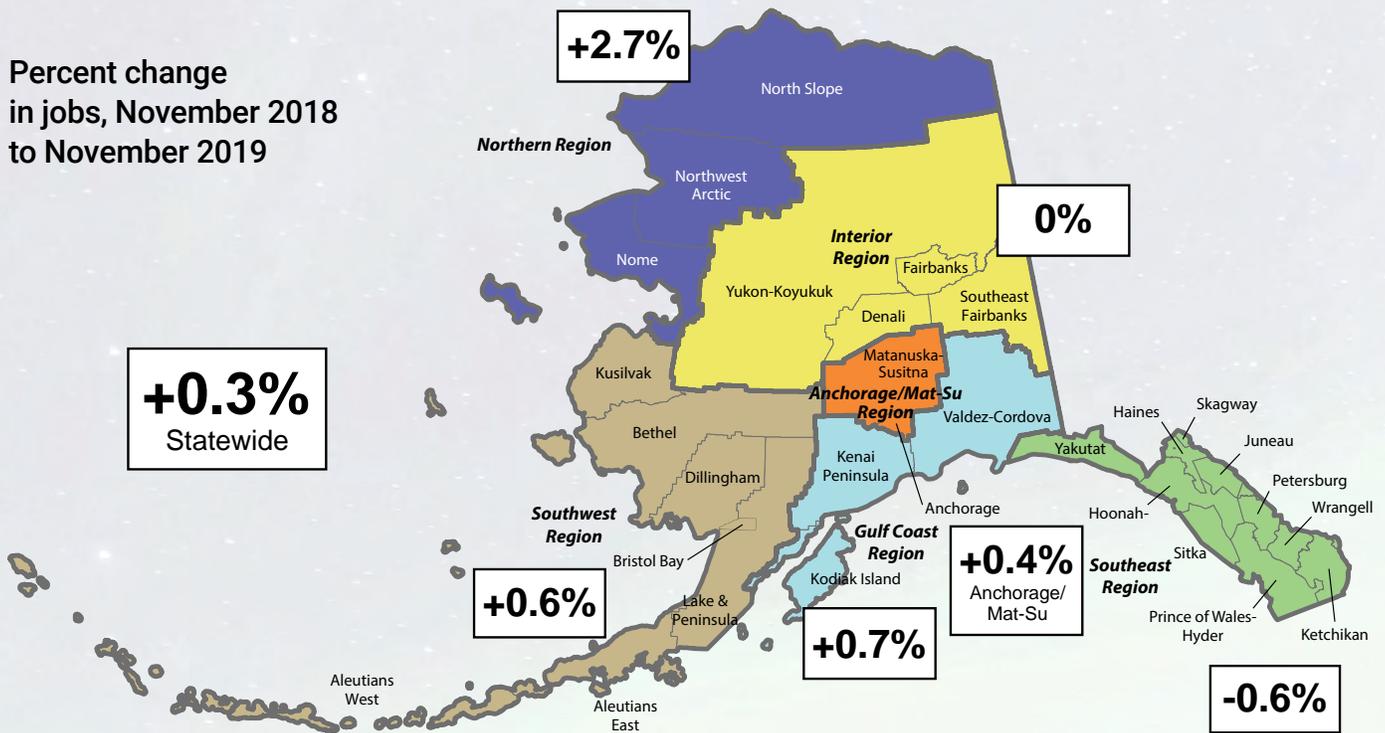
2017 to 2018



➤ The state had net migration losses for the sixth consecutive year in 2018. Net migration is the number who moved to Alaska minus the number who left.

# Employment by Region

Percent change  
in jobs, November 2018  
to November 2019



## Unemployment Rates

Seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	11/19	10/19	11/18
United States	3.5	3.6	3.7
Alaska	6.1	6.2	6.5

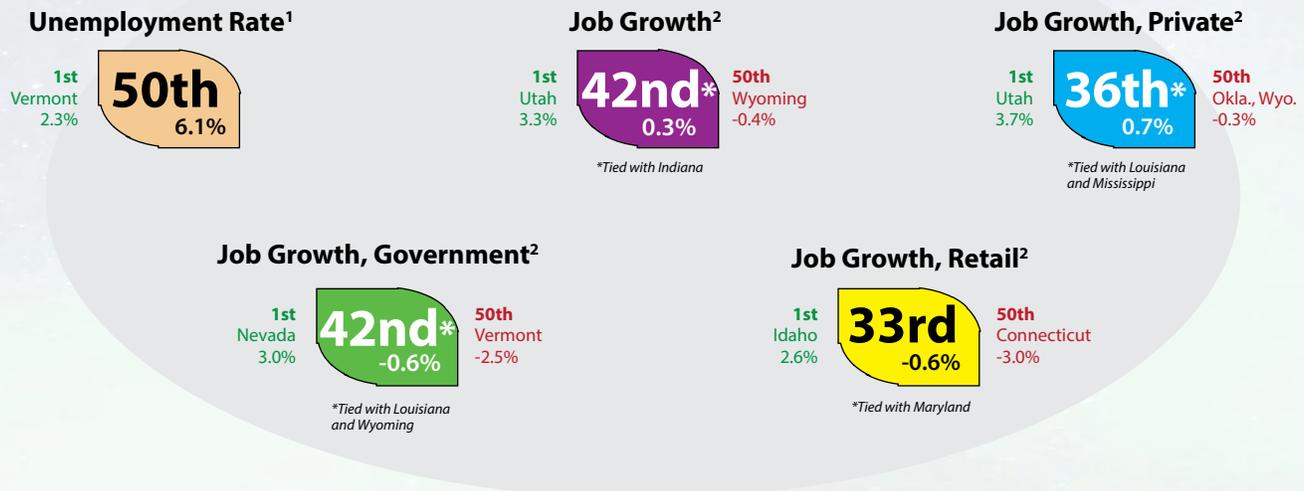
Not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	11/19	10/19	11/18
United States	3.3	3.3	3.5
Alaska	6.0	5.6	6.4

## Regional, not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised			Prelim.	Revised			Prelim.	Revised	
	11/19	10/19	11/18		11/19	10/19	11/18		11/19	10/19	11/18
<b>Interior Region</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>Southwest Region</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>Southeast Region</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.6</b>
Denali Borough	16.9	9.3	16.8	Aleutians East Borough	4.7	2.5	5.1	Haines Borough	13.5	8.3	11.9
Fairbanks N Star Borough	5.3	4.9	5.6	Aleutians West Census Area	5.0	4.3	4.7	Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	14.3	10.2	17.3
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	8.2	7.7	9.2	Bethel Census Area	11.2	11.4	11.6	Juneau, City and Borough	4.4	4.2	4.7
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	12.4	11.3	14.5	Bristol Bay Borough	12.4	7.6	11.4	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	6.9	6.0	6.9
<b>Northern Region</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.9</b>	Dillingham Census Area	7.9	7.1	8.2	Petersburg Borough	9.0	8.9	8.1
Nome Census Area	9.5	8.8	10.7	Kusilvak Census Area	15.5	15.2	17.4	Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	9.0	8.4	10.7
North Slope Borough	6.6	7.1	6.4	Lake and Peninsula Borough	8.9	7.9	13.3	Sitka, City and Borough	4.6	4.4	4.0
Northwest Arctic Borough	14.1	12.8	12.8	<b>Gulf Coast Region</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>7.7</b>	Skagway, Municipality	18.2	7.3	19.7
<b>Anchorage/Mat-Su Region</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.6</b>	Kenai Peninsula Borough	7.1	6.2	7.8	Wrangell, City and Borough	8.1	7.0	7.5
Anchorage, Municipality	4.8	4.7	5.2	Kodiak Island Borough	5.6	4.6	5.9	Yakutat, City and Borough	8.0	8.0	10.7
Mat-Su Borough	6.5	6.1	7.1	Valdez-Cordova Census Area	10.1	8.3	9.5				

# How Alaska Ranks



Note: Government employment includes federal, state, and local government plus public schools and universities.

<sup>1</sup>November seasonally adjusted unemployment rates

<sup>2</sup>November employment, over-the-year percent change

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## Other Economic Indicators

	Current	Year ago	Change
<b>Urban Alaska Consumer Price Index</b> (CPI-U, base yr 1982=100)	228.858 1st half 2019	223.099	+2.6%
<b>Commodity prices</b>			
Crude oil, Alaska North Slope, * per barrel	\$64.97 Nov 2019	\$66.84	-2.81%
Natural gas, residential, per thousand cubic feet	\$12.64 Sep 2019	\$12.22	+3.44%
Gold, per oz. COMEX	\$1,518.00 12/30/2019	\$1,281.30	+18.47%
Silver, per oz. COMEX	\$17.92 12/30/2019	\$15.54	+15.32%
Copper, per lb. COMEX	\$2.83 12/30/2019	\$2.63	+7.41%
Zinc, per MT	\$2,305.00 12/27/2019	\$2,467.00	-6.57%
Lead, per lb.	\$0.88 12/30/2019	\$0.93	-5.41%
<b>Bankruptcies</b>			
Business	105 Q3 2019	106	-0.94%
Personal	12 Q3 2019	9	+33.33%
Personal	93 Q3 2019	97	-4.12%
<b>Unemployment insurance claims</b>			
Initial filings	6,241 Nov 2019	6,934	-9.99%
Continued filings	33,021 Nov 2019	35,983	-8.23%
Claimant count	9,872 Nov 2019	9,786	+0.88%

\*Department of Revenue estimate

Sources for this page and the preceding three pages include Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; Kitco; U.S. Census Bureau; COMEX; Bloomberg; Infomine; Alaska Department of Revenue; and U.S. Courts, 9th Circuit

# Anchorage

Continued from page 12

will enter the Anchorage market with direct flights from Europe.

Utilities will get a boost in 2020 when the sale of Municipal Light and Power to Chugach Electric is finalized, moving ownership from local government to a private company.

Part of the sale agreement guarantees there will be no layoffs. Chugach Electric employs about 300 people and ML&P has roughly 230, but their combined workforce will probably be at least somewhat smaller because some ML&P workers will retire and others will look for different jobs with the Municipality of Anchorage or elsewhere.

## State and local government will continue to lose jobs as cuts deepen

Federal government employment growth bounced around zero throughout 2019 without a clear direction or explanation. Federal employment is forecasted to grow slightly in 2020 as the U.S. Census Bureau hires to conduct the decennial census. The bureau estimates they will hire more than 1,000 people statewide, most for a narrow window of just a few months.

State government includes the University of Alaska Anchorage, and like most areas, this year's forecast shows more job loss due to budget cuts. UAA's employment was down nearly 10 percent by the fall of 2019 (about 250 jobs) compared to the prior year, and similar losses are anticipated to carry through most of 2020 with another round of budget cuts on the horizon.

Local government employment fell in 2019. All of the loss was in the Anchorage School District, which represents 72 percent of municipal employment and is the city's largest employer.

The forecast shows further loss this year as the school district faces declines due to falling enrollment and budget constraints. The sale of ML&P to a private entity will also cause some employment decline for local government.

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# Fairbanks

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buoyed by oil and gas as well as the F-35 preparations. Professional and business services grew 8.0 percent from 2017 to 2018 and 3.8 percent from 2018 to 2019, with a similar outlook for 2020.

## Long-term growth in health care demand is twofold

Health care growth has been robust across the nation for years with an aging population, and we forecast the borough's health care industry will continue to grow in 2020 (2.3 percent, or about 100 jobs).

Over the last decade, Fairbanks' 65-plus age group has increased by at least 5 percent every year, as the graph on page 14 shows. In addition to the growing needs of an older population, the borough's demand for services will increase with its population projected to grow 3.4 percent between 2017 and 2025. Projected growth for the 65-plus population over that period is a whopping 50 percent.

## Big cuts to university will continue, dampening overall job growth

Government jobs are a big part of Fairbanks' economy, representing 28 percent of the borough's employment in 2019. While local and state government jobs remained flat over the last year, federal employment increased by 100 jobs, primarily due to the intense firefighting season.

This year's forecast is for overall loss, with local government stable but state jobs continuing to disappear, mainly due to cuts to the University of Alaska system budget. The University of Alaska Fairbanks, the state's largest campus, faces an anticipated cut of \$12.3 million in the 2021 fiscal year. We forecast total state government job losses at 7.0 percent, or about 300 jobs.

Federal growth will mitigate about a third of the decline, however. In addition to increased federal civilian jobs associated with the F-35s, 2020 is a decennial census year, which will create a small number of temporary positions.

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# EMPLOYER RESOURCES

## High school students get hands-on health care experience

In December, 14 high school students with disabilities from across the state attended Healthcare Career Connections in Juneau for hands-on exploration of a variety of health care fields.

Alaska employers' high demand for qualified health care workers led the department's divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment and Training Services to expand opportunities for at-risk students to get in-depth exposure to careers in the health care industry. Students also learned the educational requirements to enter and advance in these jobs.

Hands-on career exploration provides clarity for students as they transition from school to work. Presentations, tours, and instruction gave students the opportunity to discover whether this type of work aligns with their interests, skills, and abilities.

Students were interested in behavioral health, nursing, physical therapy, neonatal intensive care, and physician assistant. Notably, many of the students expressed a desire to work in the Lower 48 after they graduate, despite Alaska's higher average wages.



*Future health care worker Kianna Kivisto tests blood pressure and oxygen levels for the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Sandra Burgess.*

The department funds Healthcare Career Connections for students through the Southeast Alaska Area Health Education Center (a program of Southeast Regional Resource Center) and its partnerships with local health care providers.

Employer Resources is written by the Employment and Training Services Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

## SAFETY MINUTE

### Slips, trips, and falls are a hazard even during a warmer winter

Slips, trips, and falls are a common hazard in Alaska, even when winter is unseasonably warm. Keep your employees safe and avoid recordable injuries this winter by giving them the following safety brief:

- Plan ahead, and give yourself plenty of time to get where you're going.
- When exiting your vehicle, watch where you place your feet so you don't fall down before you even get started.
- Don't carry heavy or large loads by yourself. Instead, break them down into smaller loads or have a coworker assist you.
- Before entering a building, clean off as much snow as you can from your boots to avoid slipping on a wet floor you created.
- On stairs, use the handrail for extra stability.
- If you have a pair of ice cleats — especially if they were issued to you as part of your job — be sure to wear them for extra traction on icy surfaces.

Safety Minute is written by the Labor Standards and Safety Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.