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**Kansas labor market undergoing dramatic change**  
*Secretary Jim Garner gives State of Labor Address;  
highlights unemployment, job loss*

TOPEKA — Impacts of the national recession have been felt in Kansas since late 2008, but the most dramatic changes to the state's labor market have occurred since the start of the second quarter of 2009, said Kansas Labor Secretary Jim Garner during his annual State of Labor Address Friday morning.

"Almost 60 percent of the net job losses in our state since the start of the recession have occurred since April," Garner said. "Our labor market has changed quickly and dramatically."

Those changes stand in stark contrast to the economic picture from 2008 detailed in the 2009 Kansas Economic Report, released today by the Kansas Department of Labor. Based on information from 2008, the report indicates that even as the nation began to experience declines in home prices and negative job growth, Kansas showed modest increases in both.

"Our experience in 2008 is a totally different world from the situation we have seen in the labor market over the past few months," Garner said. "While these conditions are putting a strain on our economy, the real strain is felt most by Kansas families."

The state's unemployment rate hit 7.7 percent in July 2009, the highest percentage since January 1983. Unemployment claims are at their highest level since the start of the Unemployment Insurance Program, with the state paying unemployment benefits to more than 100,000 people. And while some forecasters are pointing to early signs of recovery at the national level, the labor market tends to be a lagging indicator.

We will continue to face challenges, but our greatest challenge will be to remain focused on how we move forward and prepare for the recovery we know will come," Garner said.

Exploring new markets, such as the emerging market for environmentally conscious products and services, will be important to growing jobs in the state, Garner said. As one of the top three states for wind energy potential, Kansas is well situated to capitalize on the demand for renewable energy sources.

Training Kansas workers for the jobs of the future is another important aspect of preparing for the recovery. Garner said legislation from the last session that allows additional weeks of unemployment benefits for individuals in approved training programs will help ensure unemployed workers are training for high-demand occupations and learn skills that are likely to keep them off of unemployment for the long term.

More information from this year's State of Labor address and the 2009 Economic Report is available online at [www.dol.ks.gov](http://www.dol.ks.gov).

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