The Fourth District’s unemployment rate rose from 5.1% in March to 5.5% in April, largely because the estimated number of unemployed rose 8.3%. (However, compared to April 2005, the number who had no job but were looking for one fell 6.1%) In comparison, the U.S. unemployment rate dropped from 4.7% in April to 4.6% in May.

In April, 11 of the District’s counties had unemployment rates that were lower than the national average, and 10 had rates near that mark; jobless rates in the other 148 counties were higher than average. From March to April, rates in all of the District’s major metropolitan areas stayed the same or increased. Unemployment rates exceeded the U.S. average in each of these areas except Lexington, which matched the average. May’s nonfarm employment was up from May 2005 levels in each of the District’s major metropolitan areas but Dayton, which lost 0.3% of its jobs. Part of the reason for Dayton’s poor showing was a decrease in service-providing employment over the year; it was the only major metro area in the District where this occurred. Nevertheless, industries such as professional and business services, education and health services, and leisure and hospitality continue to do well: Employment in these three industries increased over the year in every major metropolitan area in the District.