Bad jobs news Friday, as North Carolina's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased 0.2 of a percentage point in July to 9.6 percent. It's the first change in the rate since the April report, after three months at 9.4%. The national rate also experienced an increase in July, increasing to 8.3 percent. State officials pointed out that North Carolina's July 2012 unemployment rate is 1.1 percentage points lower than a year ago. "In July the private sector gained 16,000 jobs," said N.C. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary Dale Carroll. "When we focus on long-term growth, North Carolina has added more than 101,000 nonfarm jobs since January 2010. There continues to be a strong focus and commitment by our workforce partners and our employment service offices across our state to recruit jobs and to put people back to work in North Carolina." Maybe a silver lining for us in the High Country—the major industry with the largest over-the-month increase was Leisure & Hospitality Services, which gained 5,900 jobs. The county-by-county numbers will be released Friday.

Reacting to the figures, NC Senator Kay Hagan said, "Today's jobs report is a reminder that people across our state are still struggling and that we must do more to create jobs and improve our economy. We can't wait until after the election to take action that will put hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians back to work. I continue traveling across our state on my North Carolina Back to Work Jobs Tour gathering ideas and solutions that will move our economy in the right direction. It's clear that we must expand and rebuild our historic industries; fill available 21st-century jobs now; plan for the future with strategic investments; and grow our state's small businesses. I will continue fighting for policies that create a better environment for our state's businesses to grow and get the people of North Carolina back to work."