

# Orlando Sentinel

Saturday, March 27, 2004

A1

## Florida ranks No. 1 for jobs Orlando hiring booms, but rest of nation lags

By Jack Snyder  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Both Orlando and the state of Florida are creating jobs faster than the 49 other states combined.

During the year leading up to February, the state generated 131,400 nonagricultural jobs, a 1.8 percent increase, according to data released Friday.

The rest of the nation, however, added just 122,000 jobs during the same period, a growth rate of less than 0.1 percent, according to the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation.

That makes the Sunshine State one of the nation's bright spots in an increasingly contentious debate over jobs between President Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry.

The issue soared to the forefront this month when the U.S. Labor Department reported that only 21,000 jobs were created in

He pointed to a recent Commerce Department report showing a solid 4.1 percent pace of economic growth in the last three months of 2003 as evidence of recovery.

Turning to local businessmen on the stage with him, Bush asked: "Hiring anybody?"

One said he planned to hire 25 people, prompting applause.

Kerry, meanwhile, went on the offensive Friday, announcing a plan to change international tax laws to discourage companies from shifting jobs to foreign countries.

"Today we have a tax code that does more to reward companies for moving overseas than it does to reward them for creating jobs here in America," the candidate said at Wayne State University in Detroit.

Michigan has been hard hit by manufacturing job losses and the movement of jobs to foreign countries.

The Florida and Orlando economies, however, appear relatively insulated from the nation's job woes.

Metropolitan Orlando is one of the state's strongest performers, topping the state in job creation in February. During the previous year, the area added 17,400 jobs, a 1.9 percent increase.

PLEASE SEE **JOBS, A9**

### **JOBS** FROM A1

February nationwide.

That lack of job growth continues to confound Bush strategists, as well as economists who had expected a much stronger — in the neighborhood of 130,000 new jobs — national showing in February.

Speaking in Boston on Friday, the president defended his role in overseeing an economy that has lost 2.3 million jobs.

"The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategy to win the war or policies to expand our economy," Bush said at a \$2,000-per-person fund-raiser.

# Tourism, hot housing market help Central Florida workers find jobs

The Orlando metro area had its strongest gains in areas that include hospitality, construction and professional and business services.

To be sure, the state's job growth is not as strong as the 3 percent to 4 percent seen before recession hit in March 2001, said Susanna Patterson, an analyst for Workforce Innovation.

That view was echoed by David Scott, an economics professor at the University of Central Florida.

"It's a good but not hot report," he said. "We were creating 35,000 jobs a year."

Not surprisingly, tourism is the area's strongest jobs generator, he said.

"For all the economic development we do, we still are tied to hotel, restaurant and tourism jobs," he said. "That's who we are right now."

Still, there is more than tourism in the area.

Kristin Zangenberg, 23, graduated in May from the University of Central Florida, only to embark on a job search that stretched for 10 months.

"It was frustrating," she said. "Nothing really panned out."

Her quest ended earlier this month when she took a job in the marketing department of Pinnacle Financial Corp., an

## A BRIGHTER PICTURE?

Orlando led the state in job creation for February, while unemployment rates for the area and Florida were less than in the same time last year.

	Unemployment rate		Job growth Feb. 2003 to Feb. 2004
	Feb. 2003	Feb. 2004	
U.S.	5.8%	5.6%	122,000
Florida	5%	4.6%	131,400
Orlando	4.8%	4.3%	17,400

SOURCE: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation

ORLANDO SENTINEL

Orlando mortgage banking company that has been growing with a booming housing market.

"We're hiring people nearly every week, it seems," said Doug Long, the firm's chief executive officer.

The state also is outperforming the nation in terms of unemployment.

Florida had an unemployment rate of 4.6 percent, a full percentage point below the national average.

Orlando's unemployment rate in February, not seasonally adjusted, was 4.3 percent, down from 4.5 percent in January.