

Opinion: ‘Ohio comeback’ nowhere to be found

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By Dale Butland

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Gov. John Kasich and his allies insist that they’ve engineered an “Ohio comeback” – and offer as Exhibit A the fact that our state has more jobs now than it did during the depths of the Great Recession. But since virtually every state has more jobs now than it did then, the real question becomes how Ohio is doing relative to the rest of the country.

Unfortunately, not well. In July, Ohio led the nation in lost jobs. We continue to rank 41st in new job creation, and we’ve lagged the national average for 20 straight months. Unlike the rest of America – which has recovered all the jobs lost during the recession and then some – Ohio is still about 140,000 jobs short of where we were in 2007 before the downturn began.

But what about the quality of the jobs created under Kasich? Didn’t the governor promise that his JobsOhio program would move at “the speed of business” to create good-paying jobs in the economy of tomorrow?

An [Aug. 20 study by the progressive think tank Innovation Ohio](#) found that most of the jobs created under Kasich are low-wage. Virtually none pay enough to support a family, and for the first time since at least 2007, Ohio has more low-paying jobs than medium- and high-paying jobs. IO’s findings were underscored in an [Aug. 31 report by the Cleveland-based think tank Policy Matters Ohio](#), which found that in 2013, Ohio’s median wage was just \$15.81 per hour, 90 cents below the national median wage.

Another August analysis – this one by the Associated Press – showed what all of this means for average Ohio families. The [AP says that Ohio’s real median household income fell](#) from \$54,000 in 2007 to \$45,000 in 2012 – a far steeper drop than for the nation as a whole. Nearly half of Ohio households now live paycheck to paycheck, and 16 percent have fallen into poverty.

But if middle- and-low income Ohioans have been left out of the “Ohio comeback,” the wealthy have been its primary beneficiaries. Under the three income tax cuts that have taken effect since Gov. Kasich assumed office (including the “final installment” of the 2005 income tax cut that was previously postponed by Gov. Strickland), the richest 1 percent has, on average, enjoyed a tax cut of more than \$10,000 per year. Middle-income workers have received less than 100 bucks. And the poorest Ohioans have actually seen a slight tax increase, thanks to higher sales and property taxes.

In the words of Miami University economist William Even, the Kasich economy “isn’t lifting all boats by the same amount.” Or as suburban Cincinnati homemaker Andrea Deckard puts it: “... people who lost jobs during the recession have taken jobs at lower pay or ... requiring long, gas-sucking commutes, while monthly budgets are squeezed by higher food, gas and home energy costs.”

When Gov. Kasich promised to create an “Ohio miracle,” surely this isn’t what most Ohioans had in mind. Surely our state can do better.

Original Article:

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