

From: Maybank, Burnet R. III <BMaybank@nexsenpruet.com>

To: Maybank, Burnet R. III BMaybank@nexsenpruet.com

Date: 3/19/2014 1:43:17 PM

Subject: ED LS: AL.com: SC running away from Alabama on economic development

South Carolina, already with more jobs than Alabama, is now running away with it

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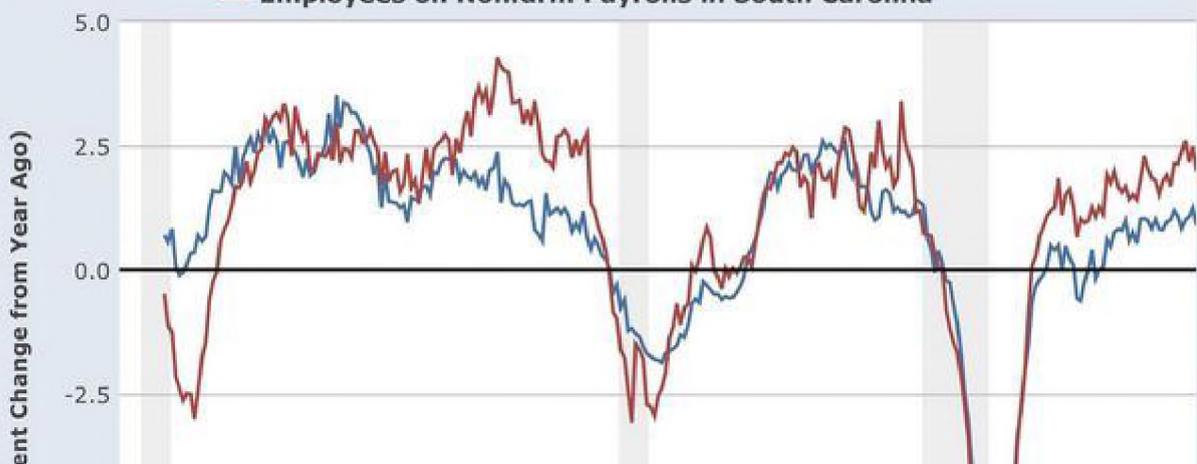
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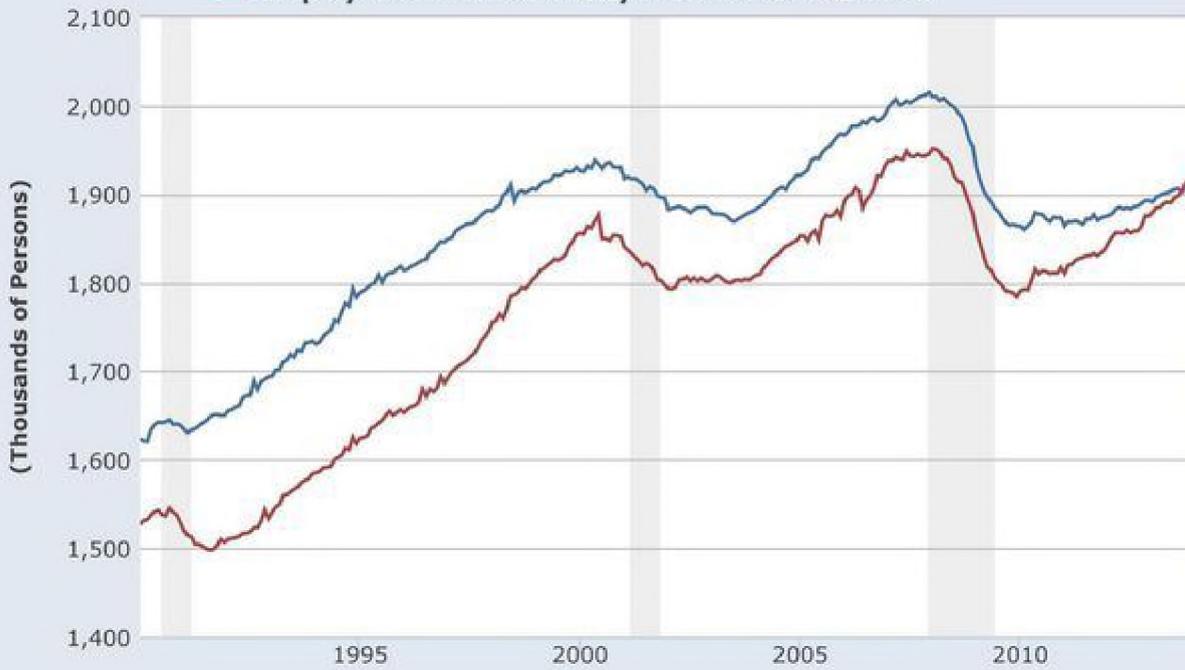


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Jobs in Alabama and South Carolina

It's hard to see, but after trailing for decades South Carolina passed Alabama in total jobs late last year. And its advantage is growing.

[Alex Walsh | awalsh@al.com](#)

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By [Alex Walsh | awalsh@al.com](#) AL.com

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on March 18, 2014 at 2:16 PM, updated March 18, 2014 at 2:19 PM

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South Carolina **continues** to beat Alabama in job growth.

The Palmetto State passed the Heart of Dixie in total jobs in September 2013, according to seasonally adjusted jobs data tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Since then, the jobs gap between the two states has widened.

As of January, South Carolina's economy supported an estimated 8,300 more jobs than Alabama's,

BLS estimates show.

Two decades ago, Alabama's jobs advantage over South Carolina may have appeared insurmountable. At the start of 1990, Alabama's economy supported 90,000 more jobs than did South Carolina's. And over the next six years, that advantage would only grow, peaking at a difference of nearly 160,000 jobs.

Put another way: at the end of 1996, the total number of jobs in Alabama was nearly 10 percent larger than the number of jobs in South Carolina.

But over the next 17 years, that advantage would slowly erode.

The change started to take hold in the late 1990s. Over a three-year period starting in July 1997, year-over-year job growth in South Carolina averaged 3 percent -- more than double the Alabama average over that same time (1.4 percent).

The two states essentially held serve over the following decade, with annual job growth averaging out to essentially zero from the start of 2000 to 2010.

Then, as the grip of the recession eased, South Carolina returned to growing more quickly. Since the beginning of the current decade, jobs in South Carolina have grown by 7 percent -- in Alabama, just 2.4 percent.

Admittedly it's a lot of numbers. But the broader point is this: South Carolina is adding jobs much more quickly than Alabama, and has been doing since the recession ended.

There are notable similarities and differences between the two states. Both are in the Southeast, a region that is benefiting from the mass exodus of many Rust Belt retirees to sunnier shores. Both are working hard to expand their manufacturing bases -- the two have often competed against each other in attempts to attract new businesses to their respective states. And the pair rank 23rd and 24th in total population, with a slight advantage to Alabama.

As for differences, South Carolina has much more coastline, and is located on the ocean rather than the gulf, a clear advantage. **More people move to South Carolina than to Alabama, particularly from the Northeast.** And Samuel Addy, director of the University of Alabama's Center for Business and Economic Research, has said that the industrial bases of each state are a bit different.

Whether or not the comparison is perfectly fair to either state, the trends are clear: South Carolina has more jobs than Alabama, and that gap is on pace to continue widening.

P.O. Drawer 2426
Columbia, SC 29202
T: 803.540.2048, F: 803.253.8277
Cell: 803.960.3024
bmaybank@nexsenpruet.com
www.nexsenpruet.com

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