

The Texas Model: The Texas Workforce

by Jeanette Moll, Policy Analyst, Center for Effective Justice

“The Texas model can’t be the blueprint for the United States to successfully compete in the 21st-century economy, where you need a well-educated work force.” —Dick Lavine, Center for Public Policy Priorities, August 16, 2011.

With national scrutiny on Texas’ economy and job growth, the critics are looking for reasons why the economy in Texas shouldn’t be given credit for its growth, and why other states should not follow our economic path. Some say that Texas’ workforce is uneducated, and as a result, employed in low-wage, undesirable jobs.

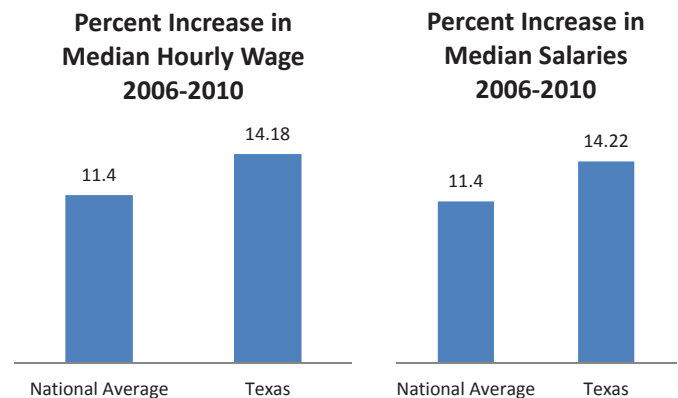
The actual data reveals a far different picture: statistics show Texas’ workforce is similarly educated to much of the rest of the country’s, and Texas wages have grown by double-digit percentages during the national recession.

First, according to the United States Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and the Population Estimates Program, 25.4 percent of Texans have a bachelor’s degree or higher. That’s closely comparable to the rate for the United States overall, which is 27.5 percent.

Furthermore, college attendance in Texas is growing substantially. According to a report from the Texas Comptroller, college attendance, including community and technical colleges, increased by 23.6 percent in the first half of the last decade. By 2008, enrollment in higher education in Texas was up 39.4 percent.

Second, educated individuals are voting with their feet and moving to Texas in droves. According to the Brookings Institution, the Austin metro area had the highest average net migration for adults with bachelor’s degrees from 2007-2009. In fact, the capital of Texas was the *only* metropolitan area to enjoy migration gains of the college educated of more than 2 percent during this time period.

Finally, our jobs are not characterized by the low-wage jobs that would be associated with an uneducated workforce. The U.S. Department of Labor reported that in May of 2010, Texas’ median hourly wage was \$15.14, while the median salary was \$31,490—right on par with the rest of the nation. Additionally, wages in Texas grew by over 14 percent from 2006-2010—during a national recession. This rate of growth is the fourth highest in the nation, and far exceeds the national average.



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Contrary to the statements made by Texas’ detractors, Texas jobs are not low wage, and Texans are not undereducated. The nation-leading influx of college educated adults and double-digit increases in Texas wages reveal that Texas’ economy is at the forefront of the nation—and *should* be a blueprint for the rest of the country. ★

