

Dates:



November 19
2nd Annual Illinois EMS
Summit

November 25
Illinois Commodities
Conference

December 02
5th Annual East Central
Illinois Broadband Sum-
mit

December 06-09
IAA Annual Meeting

January 07-09
Illinois Specialty Crops,
Agritourism and Organic
Conference

February 25-26
Governmental Affairs
Leadership Conference

November / December 2014

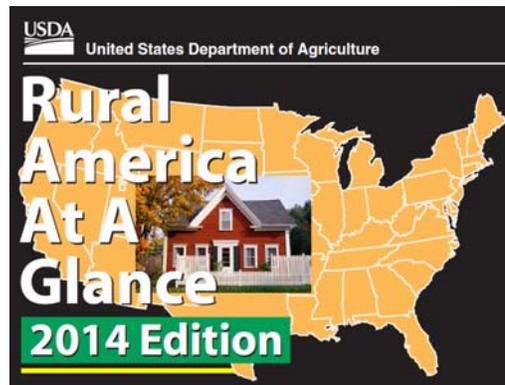
Volume 5 Issue 6

USDA reports on rural America

Statistics track gains and losses nationwide

The USDA Economic Research Service has issued its 2014 report titled "Rural America At A Glance." It compares and contrasts the rural and urban areas of the nation.

A relatively short six-page document, it pays particular attention to how each segment is bouncing back from the years of the recession. Metro counties are tending to do better than are most of the rural counties.



Among the findings reported is that rural areas are suffering a slowing in the natural increase of population.

That, coupled with a continuing net outmigration has lead to a net population loss in rural USA from 2010 to 2013; "this is the first time rural population declined since data became available in 1950 that could detect such a trend" according to the USDA.

"While there have been 193,000

(See *Rural* on page 3)

Did you know...

On average, today's farmer is 17 years older than other American workers. Farmers 75 and up outnumber those who are 35 to 44.



Voters considered more than candidates

They said "yes" to three advisory questions. Now what?

By Brenda Matherly

Illinois voters spoke volumes as they cast their ballots during the November 4, General Election. And, I'm not referring to their choice of candidate or party selection.

Voters approved the statewide "advisory" referendum that called

for an increase in the State's minimum wage. The suggested increase would raise the minimum wage from the current \$8.25 per hour to \$10 per hour by January 1, 2015. This proposed increase passed by a rather large margin, with preliminary results showing over 66 percent of the voters

(See *Advisory* on page 2)

EMS providers gather to discuss rural issues

Finding what they learn—and how agriculture can help—could benefit farmers

by Brenda Matherly

On November 19, 2014 many of our Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers and rural stakeholders will have attended the 2nd annual EMS Summit at the Northfield Inn and Suites & Conference Center in Springfield, IL. Focused on EMS providers, this Summit brings them

together to examine the condition of EMS in Illinois.

The one-day event will give participants an opportunity to explore, network and deliberate on a number of issues facing health care and review the ramifications of the



House EMS Task Force report. This is a report that was published in 2012 following a series of EMS hearings all around the State.

Participants at this year's Summit will also be able to contribute by helping to identify solutions to ongoing rural EMS challenges that pose serious threats to EMS access in rural communities. Those challenges, to name a few, include recruitment and retention of EMS personnel, continuing education requirements and funding and reimbursement.

The decision to host an EMS Summit came from a recommendation by the Governor's Rural Affairs Council's annual report; a report in which several working groups were formed to address strategies to im-

(See *EMS* on page 5)

Advisory

(Continued from page 1)

in support.

The Illinois minimum wage increase question was only one of three statewide "advisory" questions on the ballot. The other two considered: boosting education funding with additional taxes on millionaires; and, requiring health insurance providers to include birth control in their coverage. All three concepts were supported by a majority of those who voted on the questions.

So, the voters' intent might be clear, but the question remains, what do you do with it? What is an "advisory" referendum and what does it mean for our lawmakers?

An "advisory" referendum (often referred to as a "non-binding advisory" referendum) is a question put to the voters that does not carry with it the

force of law. It simply gives voters the opportunity to share their opinion on issues without binding the legislature to action.

These types of "non-binding" questions (most often used at the state and local level) can be beneficial. They tend to increase public participation and voter turnout. They can also be used to improve communication between legislators and their constituency. A vote in support or in opposition of a contentious issue can speak volumes to our lawmakers.

But, not all ballot questions brought to the voters are "advisory". Oftentimes, voters are asked to cast their vote on a question that is subject to a "binding" decision. These are called "binding" referenda. And, in contrast to the "advisory" referendum, a "binding" referendum requires

the results of the vote to be acted upon or implemented.

In both cases, the importance of voter involvement, whether through a vote of public opinion or a requirement for action, has decided many issues over the years at the national, state and local levels.

LINK

Happy Thanksgiving!

Rural

(Continued from page 1)

more births than deaths, 276,000 more people have moved out of rural America than have moved in."

Reporting in this USDA summary is focused on the national numbers, not on individual states. But the limited factors that can be gleaned about Illinois show that it's a mixed bag for job loss/growth in counties. 10 of Illinois' rural counties suffered continued job losses even into the second quarter of 2014. At the same time, at least 49 rural Illinois counties showed job stability or growth in the latter half of 2013 and the first half of 2014.

Over the past four years, employment grew by just 1.1 percent in rural America. That poor showing left it more than 3 percent below pre-recession levels. However, areas undergoing an energy boom have experienced strong growth, even in rural areas. A big contributor to that employment rate lag

"This is the first time rural population declined (nationwide) since data became available in 1950 that could detect such a trend."

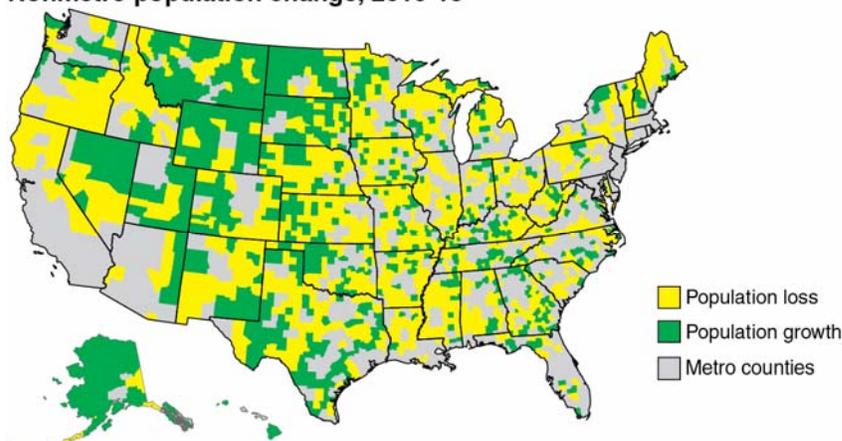
USDA

is the fact that few residents in non-metro counties are actively seeking work. And a big part of that measure—as much as a third—is due to the aging population in rural counties. Many of those folks, instead of looking for work, have simply chosen to retire.

Education levels are also explored in the data.

"Based on 2008-2012 data, the share of working-age adults

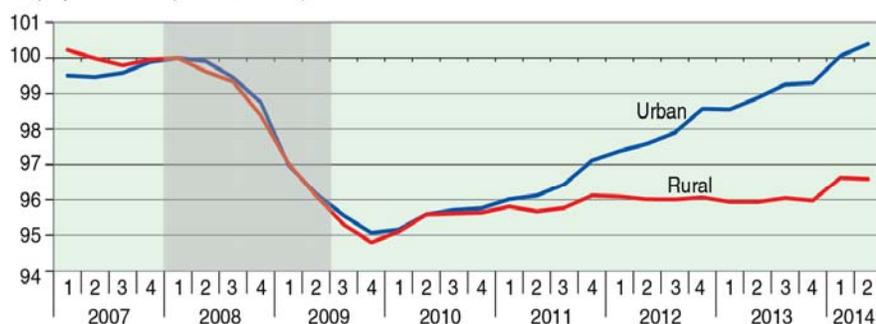
Nonmetro population change, 2010-13



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Census Bureau.

Rural employment growth lagging during recovery

Employment Index (2008 Q1 = 100)



Q = Quarter

Note: Shaded area indicates dates of recession.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau.

with at least 4-year college degree was 14 percentage points higher in urban areas than in rural areas (32 percent versus 18 percent)" according to the report.

"Across the rural-urban continuum, recovery from the recession has generally been more successful in counties where the working age population has relatively high education levels." And that has played a role in the speed of recovery.

(See **Rural** on page 6)

Services for rural elderly a growing concern

Attracting service providers requires a critical mass of population—say “j-o-b-s”

By Kevin Rund

Americans are living longer. That creates new situations for units of local government attempting to accommodate the needs of its residents—especially those in rural areas.

As of 2010, there were almost 40 million people age 65 and over in this country, or 13 percent of the U.S. population. By 2030, that number will be about 72 million, more than double the count in 2000.

The Rural Assistance Center (RAC)—a product of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Rural Initiative—points out that, “Health in old age is greatly determined by living patterns such as sensory impairments, oral health, obesity, cigarette smoking, air quality, prescription drugs, ac-

cess to health insurance, access to health care services, and opportunities for access to disease prevention and health promotion throughout the life cycle.”

The RAC further points out that the “Elderly who live in rural areas face additional challenges.” They categorize these into four areas:

Migration—generally to urban centers. Dwindling rural populations drive down services and opportunities. Often older persons are the last to move, following their children.

Environmental Challenges—lack of utilities, low-quality housing, poor roads, extreme weather conditions, etc.

Remoteness—inaccessibility to health care, education, routine shopping and appointments, and communication services.

Health Issues—inadequate nutrition and chronic illness.

Elsewhere in this issue of LINK, we point out that, nationwide—in addition to aging—rural populations are shrinking for the first time since at least 1950. That trend is likely to continue, leaving fewer taxpayers to support government services, and fewer clients to attract private providers.

The lower level of services and job opportunities means that fewer people will be attracted into the area, feeding that downward economic spiral.

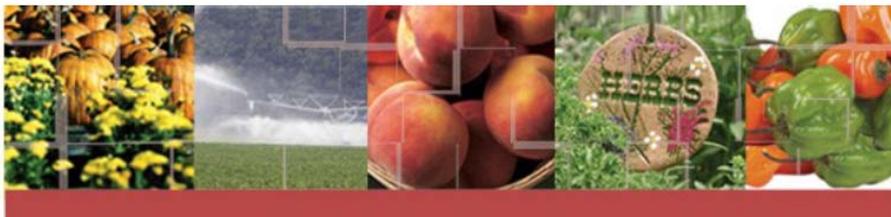
It’s a tough cycle for local governments to get a handle on. And it highlights the importance of economic development efforts at the local level.

One more thing; since agriculture is growing more and more efficient, it often can no longer

supply the number of jobs needed to maintain the critical level of population in rural areas necessary to support needed services. So, economic development—even in rural counties—must include non-ag-related jobs.

ILLINOIS SPECIALTY CROPS, AGRITOURISM AND ORGANIC CONFERENCE

The Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism and Organic Conference will be held January 7-9, 2015, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield. The conference, which features nearly 100 speakers and 70 trade show exhibitors, will again host four concurrent preconference workshops, general sessions and breakout sessions aimed at helping Illinois specialty growers cultivate their operations. For more information about this annual event, please contact Diane Handley at dhandley@iflb.org or 309-557-2107.



Interested in Internet Advancement?

Join Us for the 5th Annual Broadband Summit on December 2, at Mattoon

by Brenda Matherly

There's no denying it, we've become a world reliant on all things Internet. And, new and exciting Internet developments are happening all around us. High-speed, always-on Internet is called "Broadband," and it can come from phone lines, cable, fiber, or wireless means.

To find out more about developments that may benefit your community, business, school or organization, please register to attend the 5th Annual East Central Illinois Broadband Summit.

The event will be Tuesday, December 2, 2014 from 11:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Education Center of Sarah Bush Lincoln Health System, Mattoon. The public is invited to attend. Registration is required. The registration fee will be \$25 which covers a hot lunch, dessert, and expenses. Deadline for registration is **November 21**, but early registration is greatly appreciated for planning purposes. [Register Here](#).

Last year the Summit brought together over 70 community leaders, government representatives, broadband providers and broadband stakeholders. This year's event will again bring together broadband vendors, industry experts, government representatives, businesses, librarians, health professionals, educators, residents, economic development groups, and other community leaders concerned with

Internet advancement.

Exhibitors and presenters will offer information about broadband service options and planned broadband expansion projects in the region. This will include presentations by representatives of Frontier, Media-com, Consolidated, Metro Communications, and Illinois Century Network. Attendees will also experience real examples of how to use the Internet as a tool to improve such things as health care, education, business, and tourism.

The event is hosted by ECIDC, a non-profit organization focused on positive economic growth and an enhanced quality of life for all residents in its 11-county region (Christian, Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Effingham, Jasper, Moultrie and Shelby Counties).

Whether you're a business owner and/or private user, utilizing broadband and expanding its access to all areas in the region is vital to our economic growth and your quality of life. And, staying informed is your first step to fully utilizing new advancements.

If you plan to attend, please register online by November 21, 2014 by visiting www.ecidc.com

You may also contact Barbara Webster, ECIDC Executive Director, at bwebster@lakeland.cc.il.us

A [National Geographic article](#) explores the aging of America's farmers. Today's farmers are 17 years older than the average American worker. The average farmer is 58 years old, according to the latest Census of Agriculture. And farmers who are 75 years and up outnumber those in their prime working years of 35 to 44.

—AFBF Executive Newsmatch

EMS

(Continued from page 2)

prove delivery of services to rural Illinois.

The "Move Rural EMS Forward" working group developed this educational and transformational opportunity to bring stakeholders together with the goal of advancing solutions impacting rural EMS provisions in Illinois.

Discussion topics at the Summit will include issues such as Mobile Integrated Health Care, information on the activities of the Illinois EMS Alliance, discussions on reimbursement concerns, and education and licensure requirements.

Helping EMS providers stay informed is the first step in returning access to health care from critical condition to stable service.

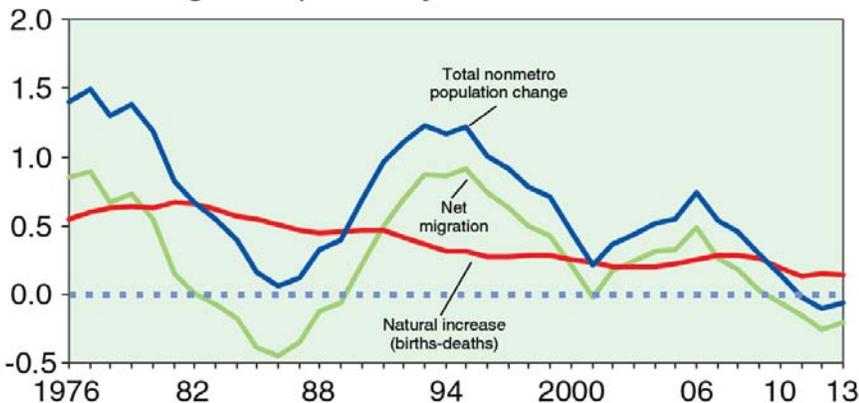
To learn more, County Farm Bureaus might want to debrief local providers who attended.

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Nonmetro population change and components of change, 1976-2013

Percent change from previous year



Note: Metro status changed for some counties in 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010. Rates are imputed for 1989-1990, 1999-2000, and 2009-10. Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Census Bureau.

The charts above and below are included in the recently-released study by the USDA Economic Research Service titled, "Rural America at a Glance." It provides a snapshot of economic and social conditions in non-metro counties across the country.

Rural

(Continued from page 3)

The study speculates that the "the occupations and industries associated with higher education, such as education and health services, have done relatively well since the recession, providing high-educations counties with more jobs to support a growing populations.

It offers plenty of graphics to provide an at-a-glance comparison of the numbers, a few of which are reproduced here to provide a taste.

The report is available as a PDF document online. Simply click [HERE](#) or on the graphic on page one to view or download a full copy of the report.

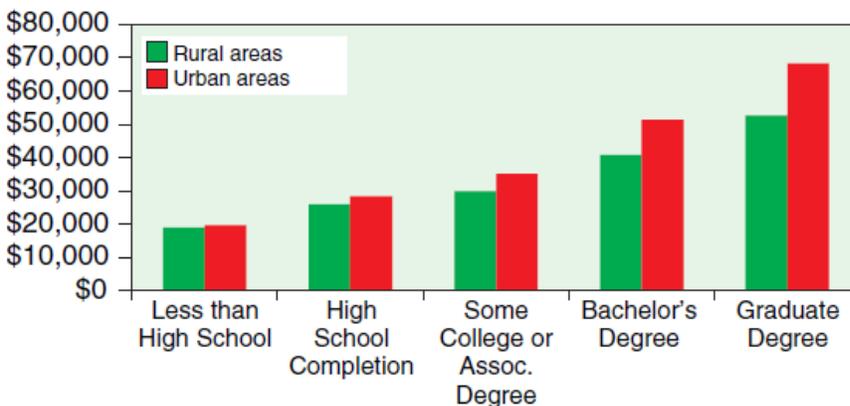
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In this report, the terms "rural" and "urban" are used as synonyms for "nonmetropolitan" and "metropolitan." For more on the 2003 and 2013 definitions of metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas as well as related concepts such as urbanized areas and central counties, see:

www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.aspx

Median earnings more responsive to educational attainment in urban areas, 2008-12

Median earnings



Notes: Values are real median earnings for earners age 25 and older. Counties were classified using the Office of Management and Budget's December 2009 metropolitan area definitions. Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.