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Teachers Hired Across U.S. as Local Government Funding Picks Up.

State and local governments last year filled more jobs in education and other areas than they have since 2008, which helped offset deep cuts to schools during the recession.

States added 21,000 jobs, including 13,700 in education, while local governments increased payrolls by 87,000, with 43,900 in schools, according to a report today from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Governments have been increasing spending since the 18-month recession that ended in 2009, according to a report last month by the National Association of State Budget Officers. While not all jobs lost have been replaced and budgets remain tight, an improving fiscal picture is allowing hiring, said Brian Sigritz, director of state fiscal studies for the Washington group.

"We're not necessarily seeing states get back to the job levels where they were before the downturn, but the total situation for states definitely has improved," Sigritz said.

More than half the 108,000 state and local government jobs added during 2014 were in education, according to federal data.

Spending has risen especially in elementary and secondary education, which suffered deeper cuts during the recession than in previous economic downturns because politicians traditionally had been reluctant to cut school funding, Sigritz said.

Government Gigs

The cuts to education were deep. More than 60 percent of the 47 states analyzed by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities are still providing less per-student general aid in the current school year than they did in 2007-08, the Washington-based group said in an October report.

Thirty-nine states boosted funding for elementary and secondary education by a net \$11.1 billion during fiscal 2015, according to the group's report. Forty also increased spending for higher education by a net \$4.4 billion, the group said.

By the end of fiscal 2015, state general-fund spending is expected to be 9.4 percent above the prerecession peak without adjusting for inflation, according to the report.

At the municipal level, more U.S. cities are increasing rather than decreasing their workforces for the first time since 2008, according to an annual survey by the National League of Cities released in October.

The hiring has been driven by increased property taxes as well as sales- and income-tax collections, the group said.

Thirty percent of cities and towns expanded their workforces in 2014, compared with 18 percent that reduced them, the report said. In 2013, only 20 percent of municipalities added workers as 32 percent cut jobs, the group said.

Eighty percent of city finance officers said their municipalities were better able to meet fiscal needs, the highest percentage in the 29 years the survey has been conducted, the league said.

Cities have not reached full recovery, and revenue projections for 2015 show slow growth as well as increases in service costs, long-term infrastructure needs and pension obligations, the league said.

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