

Good news for New Mexico workers

— By Cornelia de Bruin —
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FARMINGTON — New Mexico Voices for Children has good news for workers this Labor Day — personal income rose faster than the national average during the last few years.

Despite the national recession catching up with the state, New Mexico fared better than some of its neighbors, the group's report stated. Job growth also was strong, but both job growth and the growth of personal income indicate

they've peaked and are slowing.

"We had some really strong economic growth in 2006 and 2007, and we've been enjoying some fairly positive trends," said Gerry Bradley, the group's research director. "Job growth has slowed to between 1 and 1.5 percent of a percentage point."

New Mexico's median hourly wage surpassed Texas in 2007, and its median household income rose. During the same time period, median household incomes fell in Arizona and Utah after they were adjusted for inflation.

"Our per-capita personal income ranking was 47th in 2001," Bradley said. "It had risen to 43rd by 2006, (but) the state's ranking will not improve further — this is as good as it gets."

New Mexico Voices for Children also points out the state is plagued by a poverty rate higher than the national average, and receives fewer, per capita, transfer payments.

Transfer payments include payments from assistance programs such as Medicare, Social Security and food stamps.

Eric Griego, New Mexico Voices executive director, said the report is good news for the state's economy, but tempered his comments by noting the state faces significant challenges in areas such as health care coverage and child poverty.

"We need to make investments in key areas such as early childhood education, health care and adult basic education if we want to see long-term sustained improvements in our state's economy," he said.

Cornelia de Bruin:
cdebruin@daily-times.com