

US ECONOMY FIGURES (Video Script)

It was another strong month of hiring with manufacturing expanding at the fastest pace in three years and the service sectors retailers and restaurants continuing to grow at a healthy pace. All told, President Barack Obama says that the economy has gained more than 200,000 jobs each month for nine months straight.

“Our private sector has now added 10.6 million new jobs, over the last 56 months and this is the strongest job growth that we have seen since the 1990s.”

But the numbers mask a persistent problem for many Americans: underemployment.

Mark Hamrick, Washington bureau chief at Bankrate.com, spoke to VOA on skype:

“In this report we can see that there were 9 million people unemployed. Another 7 million people were working part time who would like to have full time work. So that tells us that, combined, the number of unemployed and underemployed is still 16 million. That’s a lot of people.”

Despite recent gains, Hamrick says that persistent underemployment and stagnant wage growth may account for the voter dissatisfaction Tuesday that gave the Republican party majority control of both houses of Congress:

“So when Americans are not making progress on their incomes, when they are seeing wage increases that are barely remaining above the pace of inflation, they feel like their economic well-being is not on the rise and they worry about the way the future may present itself..”

Average hourly earnings grew only three cents last month. And in an economy as consumer- driven as the United States, economist Carey Leahey says that’s not a recipe for growth:

“Until you see wages you are not going to see consumer spending. Until you see consumer spending you are not really going to have a strong economy.”

Despite the string of positive economic news analysts say there was little in the report to get Wall Street excited. Even less reason for the US Central Bank to raise interest rates any time soon.