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THE  
COMMONWEALTH  
INSTITUTE

*Building a Prosperous  
Virginia for All*

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## **As Job Gains Spread, Gaps Are Becoming More Stark**

*New report shows high wage job growth, but stagnation at the bottom and a hole in between*

RICHMOND, VA – There are finally more jobs in Virginia than before the recession started eight years ago. But growth in low- and middle-wage occupations hasn't materialized, and many of Virginia's communities are only a little better off today than during the last recession.

“A healthy economy is one where everyone has opportunity no matter where they live, and with a spectrum of jobs that allow people of all skill levels a path into the workforce,” says Laura Goren, research director of The Commonwealth Institute and coauthor of the report released today. “That’s a pathway to broad prosperity that Virginia is not yet on.” The Commonwealth Institute is an economic and policy research organization based in Richmond.

According to the report, between May 2007 and May 2015, the top third of occupations at the highest end of the wage scale – like engineers and financial specialists – added about 114,000 jobs. Those are occupations with median wages ranging from \$25.66 per hour to \$68.70 per hour in May 2015. But middle-wage occupations – those that pay median hourly wages between \$15.03 and \$25.61 as of May 2015, such as financial clerks, construction workers, and law enforcement personnel – lost about 72,000 jobs. And low-wage occupations such as retail sales, food processing, and material moving, with median hourly wages ranging between \$8.83 and \$14.96, lost about 4,400 jobs between May 2007 and May 2015.

For years, Northern Virginia was the lone bright spot in the state, gaining back the jobs it lost within the first year of the recovery. But other areas are coming back now. The Richmond, Charlottesville, and Winchester metro areas together have gained 61,300 jobs, and, overall, areas outside of Northern Virginia are now 41,500 jobs above pre-recession levels. Still, many areas in Virginia lack opportunity and economic growth. The Lynchburg area has 5,100 fewer jobs than in late 2007, and Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News has 3,300 fewer. Parts of the state such as Danville, Wise County, and the Eastern Shore that are not part of metro areas have 15,700 fewer combined jobs than before the recession.

The full report, *Patchwork Recovery*, is available online at [www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org](http://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org).

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The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent, and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities and Virginia as a whole. Visit [www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org](http://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org) for more information.