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Census says recession woes less severe here

Region endured smaller poverty rise than nation

By Gary Rotstein
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The economic downturn has not spared the Pittsburgh region, but household data released by the U.S. Census Bureau Tuesday offered additional evidence that the hardships have been less severe than for the nation as a whole.

The poverty rate within the seven-county metropolitan area worsened from 12.2 percent in 2008 to 12.3 percent in 2009, according to the American Community Survey, compared with a more drastic change from 13.3 percent to 14.3 percent for the U.S. overall. Pennsylvania had a poverty rate of 12.5 percent last year, compared with 12.3 percent in 2008.

The percentage of people without health insurance grew worse across the board in 2009. The ACS said the rate stood at 8.6 percent in metropolitan Pittsburgh, 9.9 percent in Pennsylvania and 15.1 percent in the

United States.

And in the case of median household income, which declined for the nation, state and region from 2008 to 2009 as a result of the recession, there was one glimmer of optimism for the city of Pittsburgh.

Within city limits, the reported median income grew from \$36,302 to \$37,461. It appeared to buck wider trends, but that city income level remains far lower than the 2009 national median of \$50,221 — a difference that is largely a reflection of the proportion of old, young and poor people who dwell in the city.

The ACS data is already a year old, and has some reliability questions because it's based on just a 2 percent sample of the population, but it supported unemployment rates and other information that have portrayed the local economy in better condition than is the norm elsewhere.

"We have a diversified economy ... that's very stable," said Joanna Doven, spokeswoman for Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl. "We have strong institutions that are really see-

SEE **CENSUS**, PAGE A-10

Massey announces its own W.Va. mine blast inquiry

By Daniel Malloy and Dennis B. Roddy
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Fed up with the joint federal-state investigation into the catastrophic explosion at Upper Big Branch mine that killed 29, coal giant Massey Energy on Tuesday announced its intention to conduct its own inquiry.

The West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training gave Massey its approval for a separate investigation and the company issued a press state-

ment calling on the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration to do the same.

A MSHA spokeswoman said the agency received Massey's plan on Friday and planned to meet with company officials Tuesday to discuss it.

Massey repeatedly has criticized MSHA's handling of the inquiry into the April 5 blast, claiming it was shut out of the process and the agency was interested only in covering

SEE **MSHA**, PAGE A-10

OBAMA ON THE STUMP



Tim Sloan/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

President Barack Obama greets students at La Follette High School in Madison, Wis., during a surprise visit Tuesday en route to the University of Wisconsin.

'Stick with me,' students told

By Sheryl Gay Stolberg
The New York Times

MADISON, Wis. — President Barack Obama, returning to the soaring rhetoric that carried him to the White House in 2008, urged a cheering throng of thousands of college students Tuesday night to "keep believing that change is possible," adding, "You've got to stick with me, you can't lose heart."

INSIDE

■ Vice President Joe Biden rallies young voters at Penn State. — **Page A-10**

is holding between now and Election Day.

With Democrats dispirited and Republicans gaining steam, the White House is seeking to recapture the enthusiasm of 2008 by energizing young people, especially the first-time voters who turned out in droves for Mr. Obama.

Police and the Wisconsin

SEE **OBAMA**, PAGE A-10

ELECTION 2010

Kay Glover serves up coffee and lottery tickets at the small lunch counter that once served as the bus station in Weirton, W.Va. Like others, she's not yet fixed on the November election to choose a successor to the late Sen. Robert Byrd. The race, once thought a sure thing for the popular Democratic governor, Joe Manchin, has tightened.



Dennis Roddy/Post-Gazette

In Senate race, popularity works against Manchin

Opponent ties W.Va. governor to Obama

By Dennis B. Roddy
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

WEIRTON, W. Va. — There is no Lillian Steel Corp., this is not Ohio, the Greyhound buses haven't stopped here for almost a decade, and Joe Manchin's real popularity as governor has also proved deceptive. Stephen Spielberg hit town

to film a movie. It's set in a 1970s Ohio mill town, and Weirton, with its gray, steaming old furnaces still standing, was the closest fit. So it became Lillian, Ohio, and the old Weirton Steel plant is now Lillian Steel.

Signs have gone up on Main Street proclaiming all sorts of businesses that never existed or long ago disappeared. What auguries are to be found of the ongoing, and very real, contest

SEE **SENATE**, PAGE A-2

2002 court case proved windfall for shale drillers

By Sean D. Hamill
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Every now and again, Pittsburgh attorney Richard DiSalle hears from people he has never represented or met congratulating him on a case he won way back in 2002.

They should be calling. And there are several hundred million reasons why.

Mr. DiSalle's congratulatory callers and writers are natural gas drillers, producers and wholesalers about to get rich from the state's Marcellus Shale gas reserve, if its potential is realized.

INSIDE

■ Natural gas extraction tax debated in House. — **Page A-11**

They'll be much richer thanks to Mr. DiSalle's 2002 case in which he represented Pennsylvania's

Independent Oil and Gas Association and persuaded the state Supreme Court to ban counties from taxing oil and gas production.

In the final decision written by Chief Justice Stephen A. Zappala Sr. before he retired that year, the court unanimously found that

assessors couldn't levy the tax. State law authorizing the taxing of minerals only mentions coal, not oil and gas, the opinion said, even though for most of the last century some counties had taxed all three.

SEE **TAX**, PAGE A-11



Richard DiSalle



Weather

Some sunshine after patchy, early fog. High 67, low 50.

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