

Lancaster New Era – Editorial – Labor Day, 2011

No holiday from job uncertainty

Could things look any more dismal for working men and women in America? On Labor Day, no less?

The U.S. economy added no new jobs in August, the government says. None. It was the worst showing of the year as employers continued to cut back hiring and trimmed work hours of existing employees.

Making matters worse, the government revised down -- by more than half -- the job growth figures for the previous month.

The unemployment rate has been high -- for what? Years, it seems. It's stuck at 9.1 percent (For African-Americans, roughly double that).

The latest jobless figures, the Los Angeles Times said, provide "stark evidence that hiring has stalled and that the feeble economic recovery remains threatened by the unusually deep and prolonged challenges facing American workers."

The gloomy figures set the stage as President Obama prepares to unveil yet another jobs proposal in a nationally televised address before Congress on Thursday.

The White House has raised expectations on the speech. Maybe it shouldn't.

The president is to detail a number of new measures aimed at getting the economy moving again, but his previous ones either did not work or did not live up to their advanced billing. (Remember those "shovel-ready projects" that turned out to be not quite shovel-ready?)

The August jobs figures are discouraging, but Americans should not let them get them down. Not on Labor Day, anyway.

The holiday was created in 1882 by the labor movement "and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers," according to the U.S. Department of Labor website.

That still stands, despite today's uncertain job market.

We celebrate Labor Day in many ways -- a day off to relax, the traditional end of summer, picnics and backyard barbecues with friends, one last trip to the shore. But we should mark the day as intended -- to honor the contributions of working men and women.

So, enjoy yourself this Labor Day, and take time to thank those who made it all possible.