



An auto worker assembles parts Thursday on the 2013 Dodge Dart at the Chrysler Plant in Belvidere, Ill. Sergio Marchionne, Chairman and CEO Chrysler Group, announced that Chrysler will add a third shift

at the Belvidere Plant to begin production of the Dart. The unemployment rate fell for the fifth straight month after a surge of January hiring, a promising shift in the nation's outlook for job growth.

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# Hiring burst

## Unemployment drops to 8.3 percent

BY CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER  
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WASHINGTON — In the most impressive surge for the job market since early last year, the United States added 243,000 jobs in January, far more than economists expected. The unemployment rate dropped to 8.3 percent, the lowest in three years.

Hiring accelerated across the economy and up and down the pay scale. The high-salary professional services industry added 70,000 jobs, the most in 10 months. Manufacturing added 50,000, the most in a year.

"This is a very positive em-

ployment report from almost any angle," said Brian Bethune, an economics professor at Amherst College.

The report could enhance President Barack Obama's hopes for re-election, which is turning on the health of the economy. The unemployment rate is the lowest since February 2009, one month after Obama took office.

Obama got a fresh talking point in the report as he works to persuade voters that his solutions for the nation's job woes are working and to give him four more years to turn the economy around completely.

His Republican foes were

quick to use the new numbers to argue that the pace of change wasn't swift enough.

"We can do better," said GOP front-runner Mitt Romney, who added: "These numbers cannot hide the fact that President Obama's policies have prevented a true economic recovery."

Money poured into the stock market, already off to its best start in 15 years because of improving confidence in the economy, and out of more conservative investments in bonds.

The Dow Jones Industrial average shot 150 points higher to 12,855 and appeared headed for its highest close since the spring before the 2008 financial crisis.