

Oklahoma's economy saw continued expansion in 2018 with increased employment, an unemployment rate below the national average and rising wages. The state also appears poised to continue its economic expansion in 2019, according to a report from the Oklahoma City Branch of the Federal Reserve of Kansas City. "Growth in 2018 was not limited to one sector of the economy, as the energy, manufacturing and services industries all posted solid increases while income in the agriculture sector showed some stability," said Chad Wilkerson, Oklahoma City Branch executive and economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. "With rising employment and positive outlooks across most industries, Oklahoma's economy heading into 2019 also appears positive, especially if commodity prices and trade discussions stabilize." The latest data show Oklahoma employment was 1.4 percent higher in 2018 than in the previous year while job growth in Tulsa and Oklahoma City was above 2 percent for the year.

The most consistent job gains were in the mining sector "which includes oil and gas" followed by trade and transportation, leisure and hospitality and professional and business service, according to the report. The state's energy sector saw increased rig counts, though not as many as in past expansions as companies have been able to increase production with fewer rigs. And while oil fell to \$51 a barrel late in the year, prices remain near the \$55 per barrel price that firms say is needed for profitability. Many firms also hedged production at higher oil prices earlier in the year, which will help maintain profitability next year. A jump in natural gas prices late in the year also provided a boost to the sector. Wilkerson said the outlook for key goods-producing sectors is encouraging heading into 2019 despite tariffs and lower oil prices. "Additionally, state tax receipts have been strong," he said. "Together, these factors suggest the state's economy is on good footing heading into 2019." Mike Averill 918-581-8489 mike.averill@tulsaworld.com Twitter: @Mike_Averill Subscribe to Daily Headlines Sign up! * I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy.