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The United States hit a milestone, in November, with the average state now claiming more employed residents than it had during its pre-recession peak. Rhode Island, by contrast is headed in the other direction.

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in November, a net 507 Rhode Islanders lost employment, while 2,052 left the labor force — which means they've stopped looking for work. That's why the unemployment rate is going down, because more than four times as many people stopped being counted than lost their employment. The first chart below tells the tale.

The local story appears in the second chart. Both of Rhode Island's neighboring states are now well above their labor force and employment levels of January 2007. Rhode Island? Not even close, and not improving.

The final chart illustrates the condition that the Ocean State would be in if its residents weren't giving up their quest for work. Unemployment would still be hovering around 11%, if as many people were looking for work as in January 2007. Specifically, Rhode Island's unemployment rate would have been 10.8% in November.

