

## Center for Business and Economic Research

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### **Press Release**

**November 22, 2009 for immediate release.**

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#### **ULM Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) Predicts 3-5% decline for Seasonal Retail Sales Revenues for Ouachita Parish Merchants**

Considerable weakness in employment numbers in Northeast Louisiana portend a weak selling season for area retailers during the 2009 Christmas holidays. The CBER forecasts holiday sales in Ouachita Parish to decline by as much as 5% when compared to 2008. By way of contrast, 2008 holiday sales in the Parish rose by nearly 2% over that of 2007, a result that ran counter to the negative National outcome.

The forecast for 2009 relies heavily on the household employment survey results (LA Department of labor) for September that shows nearly 6000 fewer people who report active employment compared to revised figures for the same month last year. Though the September 2009 figure is as yet unrevised, the number is consistent with revised August results of the same magnitude. The number of self-reported unemployed persons in Northeast Louisiana currently stands at 14,800 versus 9,100 for September 2008. The September unemployment rate for Northeast Louisiana currently stands at 9.5%, just .3 points off from the September National rate of 9.8%, up sharply from the regional 2008 rate of 5.8%. The same household survey puts the number of unemployed in Ouachita Parish for September 2009 at 5,358 (7.6%), up from 3,696 in 2008 (6.4%).