The statewide unemployment rate was 4.3 percent.
Although the economy has improved in some areas, the
Trump administration has taken too much credit, said
Rowan County Judge-Executive Walter ‘Doc’ Blevins, a
Democrat. He also criticized Republican pushes to cut
funding for health care programs and public education
while giving tax breaks to the richest Americans.
“I think they don’t give credit to the Obamas,” Ble-
vin said. “(Ivanka Trump) is a glamorous lady, she’s very
articulate, but to me the real issue is health care.”
One of the workforce development programs
Trump visited is the HAAS
eKentucky Advanced Manu-
facturing Institute in Paints-
vile.

The institute began its first
official class in November
2017 with the goal of training
former coal miners and
other Eastern Kentuckians
for work in advanced manu-
facturing.
In March, institute direc-
tor Kathy Walker said many
of its graduates will have to
leave Eastern Kentucky to
find work, but she hoped the
facility would attract indus-
try looking for skilled work-
ers.
Officials have touted other
projects, including a planned
battery manufacturing plant
in Pikeville and a $1.3 billion
aluminum plant near Ash-
land, as examples of a hope-
ful future for manufacturing
in the region.
“The workforce is here,”
Bevin said Friday. “People
are going to start to come.”
Bevin called Morehead
State University’s Space
Science Center “a gem” and
praised the university for its
role in helping train the next
generation of Eastern Ken-
tuckians for work.
The school, though, could
face strong financial hard-
ships in coming years, due at
least in part to Bevin’s own
policies.
In the governor’s proposed
state budget, the university
would lose 6.25 percent of
its state funding, or $2.5
million. It could also see a
$2.7 million increase in pen-
sion payments, all while
coping with a declining en-
rollment.
Trump complimented the
students who attended the
event, asking them to “keep
up the great work.”
“This has been an illumi-
nating day,” she said. “I
have been awed by the un-
believable beauty of the
state.”

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