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The latest national employment report held some bad news at our nation's retailers, and the National Retail Federation is sounding the alarm about further job declines should minimum wage legislation be passed.

NRF calculated retail employment down 6,700 in February yet up 205,500 year-over-year. The biggest job losses were seen in electronics and appliance stores, and sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores. December and January retail employment figures were also revised downward.

“While there are signs of modest momentum in the economy, now is not the time to play partisan politics with the recovery by forcing federal mandates on retailers and small business owners like an increase in the minimum wage,” said President and CEO Matthew Shay in response to the February jobs report.

“Such policy decisions could hamper economic growth and actually drive up the unemployment rate,” he warned.

So just how healthy is the American consumer and thus our nation's retailers who depend upon their spending? The bad winter weather might obscure the true picture right now.

“Retailers continued to rearrange and maximize their payrolls and inventories following the holiday shopping season,” added NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz.

“This decline should be temporary in nature and viewed as a speed bump,” he predicted. “We really need to lift the snow screen to adequately measure the economy

and jobs situation.”

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NRA is the world's largest retail trade association, representing discount and department stores, home goods and specialty stores, Main Street merchants, grocers, wholesalers, chain restaurants and Internet retailers from the United States and more than 45 countries. Retail is the nation's largest private sector employer, supporting one in four U.S. jobs — or 42 million working Americans.

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