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Economy Needs Workers, but Drug Tests Take a Toll - The New York Times

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from getting a job.”

more and more trouble finding people who can pass a drug test,” he said.

“We are talking to employers every day, and they tell us they are having

O’Neal of Northeast Indiana Works, a nonprofit group that provides

for manufacturers in terms of insurance and liability,” said Edmond C.

won’t hurt our workers. It’ll kill them — and that’s why we can’t take any

pounds,” Mr. Sherwin said as workers pulled a barrel-shaped steel container

“The lightest product we make is 1,500 pounds, and they go up to 250,000

Plants like Mr. Sherwin’s can help provide that ladder. But workplace

he said. “That could have a positive, cascading effect on wages.”

could potentially match perhaps 10 percent of the population in better jobs,

were trapped in low-wage jobs might be able to secure better-paying, skilled blue-

the Council of Economic Advisers under President Barack Obama, workers

Were it not for the drug issue, said Mr. Krueger, who served as chairman of

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Cruciger said, “We could take on twice as many projects if we had more suitable workers.”

Accounting for the remainder. Because tests for marijuana pick up the drug

Last year, when a member of an employee’s family gave birth to a baby

the last three years, the company has paid for five dependents of employees

particular goes well beyond the inability to fill open positions.

For smaller businesses like hers, the financial cost of the opioid epidemic in

call in sick,” Ms. Mitchell said.

“It takes more time and money to train and evaluate someone, but I can

right, observed as a machinist, Paul Wysenski, worked on a generator component.

about 19 percent in 2016,

hundreds of health agencies

New data compiled from

Than Ever
Rising Faster
Drug Deaths in
Country

Drug
Economy

economic damage,” said Alan B. Krueger, a Princeton economist who wrote

The Fed’s regular Beige Book surveys of economic activity across the

among prime-age workers.

The effect is seen not just in the applicants eliminated based on drug

“That’s definitely a conservative estimate,” Mr. Florence said. “It’s very hard

businesses from factors like lost productivity, according to Curtis S.

$78.5 billion in 2013, but that does not capture the broader effect on

A federal study estimated that prescription opioid abuse cost the economy

can’t take any risks with drugs.”

goes wrong, it won’t hurt our workers. It’ll kill them,” Mr. Sherwin said. “And that’s why we