

# Alaska State Government Employment Profile

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By Dan Zobrist

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . . it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” These familiar words of Charles Dickens describing a long ago time of turbulent change is an apt appraisal of the view many Alaskans have of the current economy.

With the cost of goods and services in decline, there are bargains in housing and services that make these good times for some Alaskans, but for the unemployed, with years of lost equity in a home, and facing an economy that is no longer expanding, indeed, these may be the worst of times. One group of employed persons who may be enjoying both the best and the worst of times is Alaska's state government workers.

The state government workforce is going through trying times as layoffs and other changes occur. In both expanding and contracting economies there are opportunities as people decide to make a change in their situation. The same will be true in state government employment.

For those interested in working in state government there are many questions. How many and where are state jobs located in Alaska? What occupations are employed by the state? Do state jobs pay a higher wage than a comparable occupation in the private sector? How many nonresidents fill state jobs? Who can apply for any state job? These and other questions may be answered with a look at the statistics which follow.

## Occupational Employment

A ten year review of past occupational staffing patterns of Alaska state government reveal that despite employment growth of over fifty percent during the period 1975-1985, the distribution of most of the major occupational categories has scarcely shifted. This relatively unchanging occupational pattern may be seen in Table 1.

A look at this unchanging occupational pattern reveals at least one fact—employment in government is comprised predominately of white collar occupations. Because state government is basically a service industry, it is not surprising that professional and technical workers represent the largest occupational category. Within this group, those employed as civil engineers, biological scientists, social workers, lawyers, and compliance officers/inspectors account for approximately 28 percent of the employment in this category.

Clerical workers are the second largest group. Predominant occupations in this category include typists (word processing equipment), general office clerks, secretaries, and book-keeping, accounting, and auditing clerks. These occupations account for 55 percent of the category's employment.

Service workers rank third in aggregate occupational classifications in state government. The majority of service workers (54%) are made up by police patrol officers, police & detective supervisors, guards, and correction officers & jailers. The brief surge of service workers in 1982 is the result of the employment of 800 emergency firefighters to fight an outbreak of lightning fires that plagued the Interior Region during the spring of 1982.

Near the bottom of the list of occupational groups with any appreciable numbers of employment in state government are the crafts, operators, and laborers. The most noticeable specific occupations here are: operating engineers, maintenance repairers (general utility), paving/surfacing/tamping equipment operators, and mechanics.

## Outlook

The Department of Labor has forecasted about 1,500 fewer jobs in state government over the next five years. The forecast makes no assumptions about specific areas in which cuts will occur. The decline in state revenues and the impacts of inflation are expected to be the chief causes of this projected downturn. Even with this decline, occupational staffing pat-

Table 1  
Occupational Staffing Pattern of Alaska State Government  
(excludes education & hospitals)  
1975-1985

Title	Percentage of Total Employment			
	1975	1979	1982	1985
Officers and Managers	15	18	14	11
Professional & Technical Workers	32	32	31	37
Clerical Workers	26	26	26	28
Service Workers	14	12	19	15
Crafts, Operators, Laborers	13	11	10	10
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Occupational Employment Statistics Program, Alaska Department of Labor.

terns are not expected to change.

## State Government Recruitment

Within state government many jobs are open to continuous recruitment. Applications for approximately 200 job classes are generally always accepted. That doesn't mean a job is available. If the minimum qualifications are met, and any required tests are passed, then a jobseeker will join a list of eligible applicants competing for vacancies. Other job classes are opened for 30 to 60 day periods during some part of the year for special recruitment.

For individuals interested in working for Alaska state government, the Division of Personnel in the Department of Administration suggests these important sources of information that are available to the general public at any Division of Personnel office.

*Jobs Book* - This provides information, including required minimum qualifications, on approximately 225 job classes available for continuous recruitment.

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*Recruitment Bulletins* - Published on the first, and sometimes middle, of each month, they announce 30 to 60 day application periods for various job classes.

*Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Job Classes* - The Division of Personnel maintains a separate book for these job classes. Since the majority of these jobs are open for continuous recruitment they are listed in the Jobs Book.

*Recruitment Schedules* - Normally published every six months, it provides a glimpse of job classes coming available.

*How to Apply Book* - This informative booklet tells how to locate information about state jobs and gives step by step instructions on how to properly complete a State of Alaska Employment Application. The last few pages list telephone numbers and addresses of offices that may be contacted with additional questions.

Additional sources of information about state government employment in the Labor, Trades & Crafts, Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, State Ferries, The Legislative Branch, the Judicial Branch, and the University of Alaska can be requested from the:

Division of Personnel  
Recruitment Officer  
P.O. Box C-0201  
Juneau, Alaska 99811  
465-4430

Now that it's known what types of occupations are typically employed by state government, and how to apply for them, the next question is: how much do they pay?

### **Wages**

Responses to a July 1986 statewide occupational wage rate survey conducted by the research and analysis section of the Alaska Department of Labor were received from 1,291 employers from manufacturing, non-manufacturing, trade and regulated industries. Information was collected on 253 occupations and 216 occupations had at least three responses. The survey data were then compared to wages for similar occupations in Alaska state government. All of the

wage information represents gross dollar amount (before deductions) and excludes tips, overtime pay, room and board, bonuses, or benefits.

There were 71 occupations in the survey that were comparable between state government and nonunion employees in the private sector. Of these, entry level wages were higher in state government for 86 percent of the occupations. Among union employees in the private sector, which may be very comparable as most state workers are members of one of the various public employees unions, the comparisons are different.

Only 21% of the 33 comparable occupations surveyed showed state employee salaries higher than their private sector counterpart. Of this 21%, nearly half of these occupations are cashiers, bartenders, or waiters and waitresses where the value of tips (an important income source for these occupations) were not collected in the survey. Typically, state government employees in these occupations do not receive tips. For wage comparisons, it would seem, the overriding difference is not whether an occupation is employed by the state government, but whether it is organized.

State employees are unionized in many white collar occupations such as managers and officers, professional and technical, or clerical and administrative support. These occupations in the private sector are typically nonunion and the wage survey results reveal that they tend to earn less than their unionized counterpart in state government.

When you compare occupations in the production/construction or operating/maintenance/material handling areas the balance tips the other way. Overwhelmingly, by a sixteen to one margin in surveyed, comparable occupations, state employees earn less. There were no data collected on hours worked or total earnings and these are important points when making wage comparisons. More detailed information is available in the publication *Alaska Wage Rates 1986* available from the research & analysis section of the Alaska Department of Labor.

## Location of State Jobs

Does an Alaskan have to live in Juneau, the state capital, to work in state government? Not really. Approximately one-third of state employees work out of the Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla area. This percentage has grown from thirty to thirty-four percent during the ten year period 1975-85. The percentage of state workers working out of Fairbanks has remained stable at approximately 11 percent.

An analysis of the December 1986 payroll, which includes hospitals, showed that the Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla area had an increase in percentage share to 37%. Fairbanks increased slightly to 12% and Juneau represented 23% of state government employment.

## Residency

While it might be expected that all state workers would be Alaskan residents a few are not. A recent study of state payroll records was made by the research and analysis section of the Alaska Department of Labor. A cross-match of state employee records with the permanent fund dividend data file reveals that 93% of all state employees are Alaska residents. The criteria used in defining resident is similar to the one used in the publication *Nonresidents Working in Alaska in 1985*, which is available from the Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section.

This crossmatch provided information on the total number and percent of residents/nonresidents (1985) by bargaining unit and by state government agency. The data showed that over ninety-three percent of state workers are residents. The crossmatch also showed that there are organizations in state government where non-resident state employment is most concentrated.

Table 3 illustrates that the bargaining units with the highest percentage of nonresidents employed are those associated with the Alaska Marine Highway system (IBU-Marine Transport 15.8%, MEBA-Marine Engineers 76.2%, MMP-Masters, Mates and Pilots 51.9%) Table 4 shows that the state agency with both the highest

Table 2  
State Government Employment  
by Location  
(excludes hospitals & education)

Year	Share of		Share of		Total
	Anchorage	State	Fairbanks	State	
1975	2,780	30%	1,117	12%	9,170
1979	3,213	31%	1,132	11%	10,410
1982	4,223	32%	1,472	11%	13,390
1985	4,764	34%	1,544	11%	13,949

Source: Occupational Employment Statistics Program. Alaska Department of Labor

Table 3  
Alaska State Government Resident and Nonresident Workers  
By Bargaining Unit 1985

Bargaining Unit	Nonresident	Percent of Total	Resident	Percent of Total
IBU-Marine Transport	101	15.8	540	84.2
MEBA-Marine Engineers	96	76.2	30	23.8
MMP-Masters, Mates, & Pilots	41	51.9	38	48.1
PSEA-Public Safety	10	2.6	369	97.4
Labor Relations	---	---	15	100.0
GGU-General Government	458	4.5	9,751	95.5
Confidential	8	3.1	246	96.9
Labor, Trade, & Craft	123	5.9	1,972	94.1
SU-Supervisors	20	1.7	1,143	98.3
Teachers	3	3.5	82	96.5
Exempt, Partial Ex	369	9.0	3,712	91.0
N/A	3	13.6	19	86.4
TOTAL	1,232	6.4	17,917	93.6

Source: Alaska Dept. of Labor, Research & Analysis, and Department of Administration.

percent and largest number of non-resident workers is the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, which houses the Alaska Marine Highway System. The complete breakout is listed below.

The total number of employees is higher in Tables 3 and 4 than what was reported in Table 2 because of different definitions of employment. Information in tables 3 and 4 includes any individual that worked for the State of Alaska in 1985. The lower total employment number in Table 2 is the annual average number of workers. All of the individuals identified as residents had received a permanent fund dividend in either 1985 or 1986. (The University of Alaska is not included in this count.)

Over ninety three percent of state workers are residents: but how long have they been employed by the state. An analysis of the December 1986 payroll file show that 55.4% of state

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Table 4  
Alaska State Government Resident and Nonresident Workers  
By Department 1985

Department	Nonresident	Percent of Total	Resident	Percent of Total
Governor's Office	9	2.7	326	97.3
Administration	59	3.9	1,457	96.1
Law	32	6.9	431	93.1
Revenue	31	6.5	448	93.5
Education	38	5.2	691	94.8
Health & Soc Serv	77	3.8	1,960	96.2
Labor	18	2.3	775	97.7
Commerce	23	4.4	503	95.6
Military Affairs	1	0.9	114	99.1
Natural Resources	158	8.0	1,820	92.0
Fish and Game	134	7.5	1,654	92.5
Public Safety	101	7.6	1,221	92.4
Environmental Conservation	8	2.8	274	97.2
Corrections	24	2.2	1,073	97.8
Community & Regional Aff	3	1.4	213	98.6
Transportation & Pub Facil	405	10.7	3,363	89.3
Ombudsman	1	3.0	32	97.0
Legislative Affairs	35	5.1	658	94.9
Audit	2	3.3	59	96.7
Legislative Finance	1	2.0	50	98.0
Court System	72	8.3	795	91.7
Total	1,232	6.4	17,917	93.6

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis, and Department of Administration.

Table 5  
Alaska State Government  
Number and Percentage of Workers by Gender  
in Higher Paying State Jobs / 1  
(excluding University of Alaska)  
December 1986

Department	Gender	Number in Higher Paying Jobs	As a Percent Total Dept. Employment	As a Percent of Total Employment by Gender	
				Males	Females
Governors Office	Male	47	25	84	—
	Female	80	42	—	59
Administration	Male	224	21	63	—
	Female	234	22	—	32
Law	Male	111	31	93	—
	Female	107	30	—	45
Revenue	Male	90	28	72	—
	Female	71	22	—	36
Education	Male	99	24	68	—
	Female	105	26	—	40
Health & Social Services	Male	333	21	62	—
	Female	547	35	—	53
Labor	Male	225	33	86	—
	Female	257	38	—	62
Commerce & Economic Development	Male	145	39	78	—
	Female	85	23	—	45
Military Affairs	Male	34	35	54	—
	Female	3	3	—	9
Natural Resources	Male	339	47	87	—
	Female	144	20	—	44

workers currently employed have a hire date of four years or less. This is consistent with the fact that state government expanded with the rest of the Alaska economy, and population, during the period 1982-83 when both oil prices and state revenues were at a peak.

### Do Men Have Better Paying Jobs Than Women?

In a period of economic stagnation any job is a good job, but some jobs are better than others. Are women as likely as men to have a higher paying job in state government? Some information would suggest not.

The December 1986 state payroll file

provided information on the pay ranges of the individual jobs held by women and men (Table 5). The balance between females and males having pay range 13 jobs (approximately \$2300/month or higher) or laborers, trades and crafts jobs of pay range 53 or better (\$16.46/hour or better) and Public Safety Officers Unit pay range 73 (\$2599 and above) differs for most state agencies, but in every case the balance is one way: there is a higher percentage of male employees, as a percent of employment by gender, in these better paying jobs than there are females in those positions. As an example, in the Department of Law 93% of the males employed are in range 13 jobs or higher—compared to 45% of the fe-

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Table 5 (continued)  
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(excluding University of Alaska)  
December 1986

Department	Gender	Number in Higher Paying Jobs	As a Percent Total Dept. Employment	As a Percent of Total Employment by Gender	
				Males	Females
Fish & Game	Male	490	59	90	—
	Female	110	13	—	38
Public Safety	Male	420	56	92	—
	Female	55	7	—	19
Environmental Conservation	Male	124	56	93	—
	Female	39	18	—	45
Corrections	Male	657	67	97	—
	Female	208	21	—	67
Community & Regional Affairs	Male	61	35	90	—
	Female	55	32	—	53
Transportation & Public Facilities	Male	1,285	60	79	—
	Female	169	8	—	33
Ombudsman	Male	5	100	100	—
	Female	0	—	—	—
Legislative Affairs	Male	64	32	93	—
	Female	121	61	—	92
Legislative Audit	Male	13	33	100	—
	Female	26	66	—	100
Legislative Finance	Male	4	27	100	—
	Female	11	73	—	100
Court	Male	54	10	52	—
	Female	104	19	—	23

/1 Higher paying state jobs is defined as those jobs in pay range 13 (approximately \$2,300 per month) or better in the general government confidential and supervisory bargaining units, wage group 53 (approximately \$16.46 per hour) or better in the skills and crafts bargaining unit, and pay range 73 (approximately \$2,599 per month) or higher in the regularly commissioned public safety officers unit.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis, and Department of Administration.

males employed. (The exception is those organizations where 100% of both genders are in these higher job classes such as Legislative Audit.)

The comparisons for each state department is listed in Table 5 (page 22 and 23). The table shows by gender and department the number employed at these higher pay ranges as a percentage of total department employment, and as a percentage of total employed of that gender. As an example, the Department of Administration shows that during December, 1986, 224 males were employed at a pay range of 13 or higher, that this represented 21% of total department employment, and 63% of the total males employed by that department. One note of caution: Providing information on gender is voluntary and as a result 14% of the observations are missing.

## Summary

While Alaska is not falling to the depths that Charles Dickens describes in his eighteenth century tale of London and Paris during the French Revolution, it is experiencing a period of economic contraction. Jobs can be tough to find even for well qualified Alaskans. The information presented above is intended to provide helpful information about employment in Alaska state government to those Alaskans seeking employment with the state. Analysis on specific topics of wage rates, residency, and demographic characteristics showed that state workers are overwhelmingly Alaska residents, make wages that reflect their unionized status, and are predominantly male in the higher paying jobs. For additional information on any specific item mentioned the reader is encouraged to contact the research and analysis section of the Alaska Department of Labor.