

# Alaska's Legal Services

## Most law firms are small, centered in Anchorage

Lawyers are the most well-known part of the legal services industry in Alaska, and they're also the largest — in 2012, 89 percent of all legal firms in Alaska were law offices. The remaining 11 percent comprised notaries, title and settlement agencies, and specialty legal services such as patent offices, paralegals, and process servers.

Law firms are generally small in Alaska, and none had more than 100 jobs in 2012. Of the 344 establishments that employed at least one person in 2012, 41 percent had an average of one job or less<sup>1</sup> (see Exhibit 1) and only 3 percent had 20 jobs or more.

### Different pattern in Alaska

In the U.S., legal services employment dropped dramatically during the recent recession, and industry wages fell by \$5.5 billion from 2007 to 2011. Technological advances have contributed to this contraction, as an increasing percentage of legal research can now be done by paralegals and other workers without law degrees.

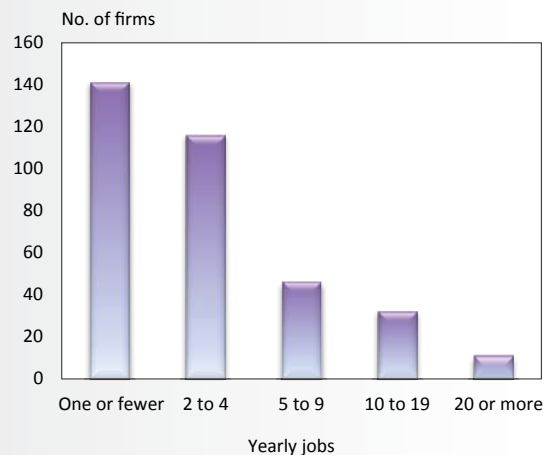
In contrast, legal services employment in Alaska had been on a long-term steady decline, shrinking by 15 percent between 2002 and 2012 but taking less of a dramatic hit during the recession. (See Exhibit 2.)

Total wages paid by Alaska legal service firms also fell over the same period by roughly 11 percent. However, average pay changed very little in those 10 years, increasing by about \$2,650 in 2012 dollars.

Annual pay for Alaska legal jobs tends to be much less than the U.S. average, at \$56,621 in 2012 compared to the nation's \$85,130, partly due to

<sup>1</sup>A firm that hired a temporary worker for three months in 2012 would be rounded to zero annual average jobs for the whole year.

### 1 Alaska Law Firms Are Small 2012



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Alaska's smaller firms. Many of the technical and clerical jobs are also part-time or lower-paying than their southern counterparts. Forty-five percent of Alaska's legal service jobs are filled by office and administrative workers, who generally make less.

Another difference between Alaska and U.S. legal employment is that with these services being largely urban, 78 percent of legal jobs and 70 percent of firms are in a single city: Anchorage. For comparison, Anchorage has just 38 percent of Alaska's overall employment. Fairbanks and Juneau have 10 and 5 percent of the remaining legal jobs respectively.

### Legal work in other industries

Litigation finds its way into nearly every industry, so not all legal workers are part of legal ser-

vices, which is only the second-largest industry for legal jobs. The biggest is state government. The state paid \$62 million in wages to its legal employees and \$41 million to lawyers alone in 2012. (See Exhibit 3.) Other industries with the most workers in legal occupations include the mining industry, followed by financial services and local government, in that order.

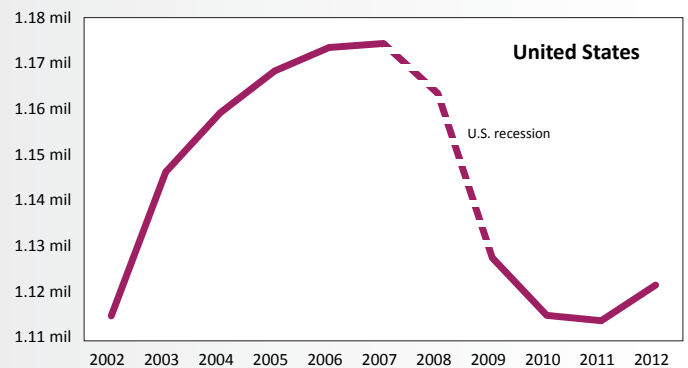
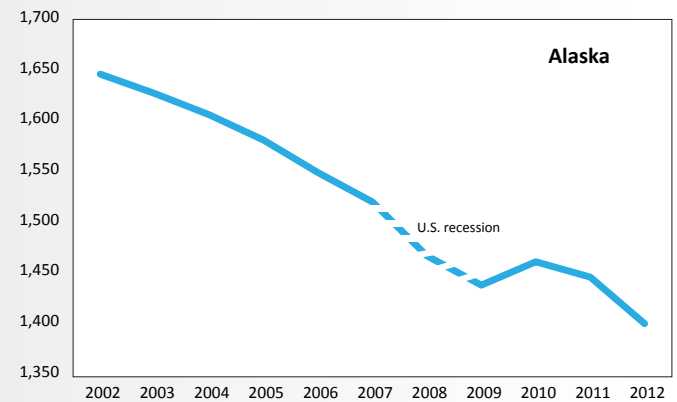
## Workers and whom they work for

In 2012, 2,864 people held legal jobs, 1,843 of whom were Alaska residents. More than 50 percent were over the age of 45.

Among the residents, 66 percent were women compared to 50 percent for the U.S. as a whole. Women dominated the paralegal occupation at 91 percent, similar to the U.S. rate of 85.9. In contrast, more than 53 percent of lawyers were female — quite high compared to the U.S. rate of 31 percent.

In terms of individual occupations, most of the workers in the legal services industry are lawyers or paralegals, with a gamut of professional, clerical, and technical occupations in the mix as well. (See Exhibit 4.)

## 2 A Different Trend in Alaska Legal services employment, 2012



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Legal professions require specialized training, such as law school and passing the bar exam to become licensed as a practicing attorney, taking oaths as public servant judges, or obtaining techni-

## 3 Wages by Industry Legal occupations, 2012

Industry	Total wages
Mining	\$7,647,875
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$1,025,563
Information	\$1,207,046
Financial services	\$7,389,298
Legal services	\$49,577,643
Prof and Business Svcs exc legal services	\$2,442,927
Health care and Education	\$1,138,019
All other private industries	\$2,530,206
Total Private	\$74,050,816
Local Government	\$7,084,131
State Government	\$61,867,434

Note: No federal data are available from this source.  
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## 4 Alaska's Legal Occupations Private and state/local, 2012

Occupational title	Annual worker count	Total wages*
Lawyers	1,257	\$97,162,626
Judicial Law Clerks	186	*
Admin Law Judges, Adjudicators, Hearing Officers	92	*
Arbitrators, Mediators, and Conciliators	15	*
Judges, Magistrate Judges, and Magistrates	65	\$868,936
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	656	\$20,558,371
Court Reporters	16	\$266,204
Title Examiners, Abstractors, and Searchers	65	\$3,205,072
Legal Support Workers, All Other	332	\$12,167,169
Legal Secretaries	735	\$20,309,683

\*Wages are suppressed due to confidentiality requirements.  
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## 5 Federal Legal Occupations

### Alaska jobs and salaries, 2013

Type of Occupation	March jobs	Average salary
General Legal and Kindred Administration	9	\$67,170
General Attorney	82	\$129,772
Hearings and Appeals	4	\$99,796
Administrative Law Judge	2	\$144,454
Paralegal Specialist	31	\$66,769
Contact Representative	25	\$47,706
Legal Instruments Examining	11	\$48,151
Land Law Examining	27	\$77,043
Legal Assistance	22	\$48,740
Veterans Claims Examining	25	\$67,859
Claims Assistance and Examining	2	\$47,656
Total, all legal occupations	240	\$86,126

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management

cal certifications to become a notary.

## On federal jobs

Federal workers are not included in the private industry or occupational numbers the rest of this article uses, but the most recent figures from the Office of Personnel Management show 240 jobs in the “legal and kindred services” occupations in 2012, paying an average of \$86,126.

Though federal data aren’t directly comparable with the other sources this article uses, these numbers would make the federal government the second-largest employer of legal workers after the State of Alaska. Many federal legal jobs are military and veteran-related, but general administration, land management, and Social Security also employ legal workers. (See exhibits 5 and 6.)

## 6 The Federal Legal Workforce

### Alaska jobs, salaries, and length of service, 2013

Federal agency	Jobs (March)	Average salary	Avg svc in years
Veterans Benefits Administration	30	\$69,705	10.1
Pacific Air Forces	15	\$78,389	11.3
Air Force Legal Operations Agency	1	\$104,265	13.5
Air National Guard Units (Title 32)	1	\$53,670	20.9
U.S. Army Installation Management Command	8	\$90,050	10.8
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	9	\$109,160	13.2
U.S. Army Medical Command	15	\$50,160	6.7
U.S. Army, Pacific	6	\$69,171	13.8
U.S. Coast Guard	5	\$55,892	6.8
Transportation Security Administration	1	\$125,896	8.3
Customs and Border Protection	3	\$81,032	15
Office of the Solicitor	12	\$115,302	16.1
Office of Personnel Management	1	\$116,169	7.3
Offices, Boards and Division	2	\$107,466	32.4
Executive Office for U.S. Attorney and Executive Offices for the U.S. Attorneys	37	\$117,350	13
Indian Health Service	2	\$57,867	21.4
Office of the Senior Coordinator for NW/Alaska	2	\$89,990	4.2
National Labor Relations Board	1	\$126,729	16
General Counsel	1	\$130,249	22.3
Office of the General Counsel	3	\$128,310	13.3
Indian Affairs	13	\$59,819	12.9
Bureau of Land Management	36	\$68,590	21.8
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	1	\$90,186	27.1
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	11	\$126,862	18
Social Security Administration	18	\$69,893	6.9
Federal Aviation Administration	4	\$151,494	22
Forest Service	2	\$67,851	23.8
Total, all agencies	240	\$86,126	13.7

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management