



Feature

## The Legal Job Market in Atlanta

**While Atlanta itself has just over 500,000 residents, the city is at the heart of the 9th largest metropolitan area in the United States, with over 5 million residents. Not only is Atlanta one of the largest metro areas in the US, but it is also the biggest city and the capital of Georgia. Currently, the Atlanta skyline is also home to the 30th tallest building in the world, and the largest US skyscraper outside of Chicago and New York (though Nashville, Tennessee will soon beat their record).**



While Atlanta may have some good points, is it a good place to find legal jobs?

### Top Law Firms in Atlanta

Although Atlanta is home to many large legal firms, one of the most prestigious is Alston & Bird. The firm employs more than 800 attorneys in their seven US offices, but about half of them are located in Atlanta. For nine straight years, Forbes has named the firm one of the top companies for which to work in the United States. The firm has a Legislative & Public Policy Group which is led by Bob Dole and Tom Daschle, and one of the firm's former partners is now the US ambassador to Australia. The firm focuses primarily on public policy, litigation, corporate, tax, and intellectual property law.

### Attorney Outlook for the Future

If you're planning to relocate to look for Atlanta attorney jobs, you may have good fortune. Professional jobs such as these are expected to grow at a rate of about 2.5% from now until 2014. That's almost a full percent faster than the average of all of the other jobs in the city combined. That's good news, which also explains why being a lawyer is considered one of the fastest growing careers that require more than a bachelor's degree in both the Atlanta metro area and in the entire state of Georgia.

In all of Georgia, about 400 new attorney positions are expected to open up annually. About two-thirds of those positions will be brand new ones created to meet the increasing need for representation by the state's residents. The rest will be a result of turnover and retirement. If you're most interested in Atlanta, the good news is that about 25% of those positions which will be available will be found in the metro area.

Another good reason to choose Atlanta is salary. Since 2001, the average salary for an attorney in Atlanta has been

on the rise by at least 1-to-2% ever year. Furthermore, the pay for an attorney in Atlanta is higher than in any of the other major cities in the state. In fact, the only city in the region which comes close to tying its salary is Chattanooga, which is located in Tennessee. Additionally, when compared to the wages for all of the other fastest-growing careers requiring a post-bachelor's degree, only chief executives can expect to earn more in Atlanta than an attorney.

As of 2007, the average attorney salary in Atlanta was more than \$106,000, which is about \$4,000 above the national average. Given the steady growth of attorneys' salaries in the past, it should continue to increase.

### The Georgia Bar Exam

As with any state, you'll need to successfully complete the bar exam before you are allowed to practice law in the state. Although some states, such as California and Arkansas, are notorious for their tests' difficulty levels and high failure rates, most people who take the Georgia bar pass it on the first try. In 2008, a total of 506 people took the exam, and about 65% passed. However, the rate for people taking it for the first time and passing was much higher: almost 83%. Less than two-fifths of re-takers managed to pass. The exam is also comparable to those found in other states because about 84% of test takers who had already passed the bar exam in another state passed in Georgia as well. If you've complete your law studies in-state at a university approved by the American Bar Association, you stand a pretty good chance of passing: 94% of test takers who met those qualifications passed the exam in 2008.



Like many of these exams, Georgia's test takes place over two days. On the first day, you'll complete four essay questions (45 minutes each) and two Multistate Performance test questions (90 minutes each). The actual Multistate Bar Exam's 200 questions are given on the second day of testing. However, if you do not receive a score of at least



## Feature

115 on the second portion of the test, your essay responses won't even be graded. If you do have both parts graded, you must score at least a combined 270 in order to pass.

Although Georgia will not accept bar exam scores from other states, you can be allowed to practice law without passing the examination under certain circumstances. You must be currently practicing or teaching law in a state that allows Georgia lawyers to practice there without taking the examination. You must also have five to seven years of experience and meet Georgia's educational requirements.

### Quality of Life in Atlanta

Despite being a large metro area, Atlanta's cost of living is quite reasonable. Comparisons to other metro areas have

found it is about 2.5% less expensive than the average city, and costs less than half that of New York City. Of the 10 metro areas in the U.S. with the highest populations, Atlanta has the third lowest cost of living and is the fifth least expensive of all the ten fastest-growing metro areas. Basically, Atlanta combines the benefits of living in a city with the prices of living in a less-urban area.

For sports enthusiasts, the city also has a number of major league teams. For families, the city is home to a zoo that includes pandas, a botanical garden, an aquarium, art and history museums, and top schools and universities.

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.