



Feature

## The Legal Job Market in Tennessee

**More than 6.1 million people call Tennessee home, making it the 16th most populous state in the country. However, there is more to the state than people. The state is also considered to have the 18th largest economy. Tennessee is home to the Great Smoky National Park, which is one of the most majestic parts of the southern United States. Its largest city, Memphis, is also the birthplace of one of music’s most legendary performers, Elvis Presley.**



Despite all of these plusses, you still need to wonder if Tennessee is the right place to find legal jobs.

### Top Law Firms in Tennessee

The state’s most impressive law firm is undoubtedly Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz. With more than 500 attorneys, this firm is not only one of the largest in Tennessee, but in the south. Tennessee is home to 6 of the firm’s 19 offices. Besides the Nashville office, you can find the firm in Memphis, Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Huntsville. Among some of the most significant areas of their practice are federal law, Gulf Coast reconstruction, and international law. Former attorneys for the firm have held top roles in the government as ambassadors, Senate leaders, and state governors.

Although headquartered in Nashville, Bass, Berry & Sims has a major presence throughout Tennessee, thanks to its two other locations in Knoxville and Memphis. With more than 200 attorneys employed in the state, they are definitely one of the largest. Their areas of practice include corporate bankruptcy and real estate; they are one of only six firms in the entire country who have been selected for membership to the State Capital Global Law Firm Group and Lex Mundi. Additionally, they spearheaded a movement to increase the starting salary of attorneys to six figures throughout the state. Now most of the other major law firms are following in their footsteps, which is a good sign for attorneys wanting to relocate to Tennessee.

### Attorney Outlook for the Future

While salaries at some law firms in the state may be on the rise now, short-term growth in this field does not look as promising. The state is expecting to see phenomenal growth in some fields, but between 2007 and 2009 attorney jobs in Tennessee will only increase by about 1%. However, recent data between 2007 and 2008 tells a slightly different story. Between those two years, the number of attorneys in the state actually increased by nearly 500. That’s an increase

of almost 10%. Of course, the growth may dwindle between now and next year.

Currently, Tennessee employs about 6,600 attorneys. More than 2,000 of them are located in Nashville. However, large numbers can also be found in other major cities, including Memphis, Knoxville, and Chattanooga. Of those three cities, only Chattanooga saw the number of attorneys decrease (from 760 in 2007 to 720 in 2008). The other two saw significant increases of 100 in Knoxville and 90 in Memphis over the course of a single year. Of course, Nashville’s growth was even larger: it added about 250 attorneys in that same period.

Even though the number of attorney jobs in Tennessee seems to be growing most quickly in Nashville, that city is also seeing a decline in salaries not found in the other three cities, or in the rest of Tennessee. In fact, Nashville’s average salary of \$101,000 was actually about \$6,000 less than that of the state’s average. Plus, it has decreased by \$4,000 between 2007 and 2008.

The picture is much brighter for attorneys in the other three cities. During the same period, all three saw an increase. In Chattanooga, the average salary rose from \$121,000 to almost \$140,000. In Memphis, the salary rose from \$105,000 to \$116,000. In Knoxville, the salary increased from \$84,000 to almost \$90,000. All of these cities, except Knoxville, have average attorney salaries that are higher than the national average.



### The Tennessee Bar Exam

Another consideration for anyone wanting to practice law in Tennessee is the state’s bar examination requirements. The pass rate of between 75 and 85% for first time takers

is significantly higher than the rates in many other states, including California and Nevada, which are both notoriously difficult. Despite that fact, the examination itself is quite grueling.



## Feature

In most cases, the exam is given on a Tuesday and a Wednesday, and spans both days. On the first day, you will complete six hours of tests divided into two three-hour long sessions. This constitutes one of the main portions of the test. Your score here will determine how well you must do on the second day of testing. On Wednesday, you will complete 12 essay questions. A full 30 minutes is given for each question which means that you can expect another six hour day. However, the better you do on the first day the less important these questions are going to be. If you've receive a score of more than 135 on the first day, for example, you only need to pass seven of the questions. That's compared to nine of 12 essays that must be passed if you score just 10 points lower.

When you pass the Tennessee Bar examination, you will also need to complete a second test known as the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination. That must be passed with a score of at least 75 within the next two years.

Also, keep in mind that Tennessee does not accept scores from other states' Bar exams. The only exception is if the examinations are taken concurrently, which means you are taking both within the same general time period. In that case, the state may accept the other score but you must receive written permission from the state first.

### Quality of Life in Tennessee

One thing you don't have to worry about in Tennessee is a high cost of living. Studies have found that after examining the costs of living in fourteen cities in the state, it is 10% cheaper to live there than the national average. There are a couple of other advantages as well. One is that no state income tax is collected on the salary you earn. Taxes are only collected on investment income, with only a few exceptions. Additionally, there is no state property tax. You may have to pay a local property tax, however.

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.