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THE TALENT

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Legal Sector Loses 2,000 Jobs in September

Posted by Brian Baxter

According to a monthly jobs report released Friday by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the nation lost 263,000 jobs in September as the unemployment rate reached 9.8 percent, the highest in 26 years.

The legal sector wasn't spared. When the data is seasonally adjusted, the sector shed another 2,000 jobs. When not seasonally adjusted, the legal industry lost 13,600 jobs, likely a result of the conclusion of most summer associate programs and the return of students to their law schools. (Click here for the BLS report, The Employment Situation: September 2009.)

While layoffs at Am Law firms appear to have tapered off from their torrid pace earlier this year, some firms are still trimming their headcount. Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal enacted its third round of cuts of the past 18 months, reducing its ranks by 30 lawyers in September, including 10 income partners.

Baker Botts also recently let go of a number of associates, but the firm has not specified exact numbers.

One bit of good news is that one year after the collapse of Heller Ehrman, no major law firms have folded since the dissolution of WolfBlock in March.

Still, early signs don't point to any major improvements in October's employment stats for the legal field.

On Friday, sibling publication *The Recorder* reported that Cooley Godward Kronish was laying off 58 staffers, with the majority of the cuts coming from the secretarial ranks. The layoffs represent nearly 6 percent of the firm's total staff. Cooley previously cut 52 lawyers and 62 staff in January.

See *The American Lawyer's Layoff List* for more law firm layoff numbers.

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