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## U.S. Legal Job Market Contracts in 2008

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The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics released its highly anticipated job report on Friday and the legal services industry didn't escape unscathed.

According to the government's [31-page report](#), the legal services industry in the United States shed some 7,000 jobs between December 2007 and December 2008.

The numbers reflect a [series of layoffs by firms nationwide](#) over the last several months and the dissolutions of [Am Law 100](#) firms [Heller Ehrman, Thelen, and Thacher Proffitt & Wood](#). (The BLS numbers include not just lawyers on payroll, but paralegals, public relations specialists, secretaries and other positions.)

The job losses mirrored cuts across the economy -- in all, 2.6 million U.S. jobs were lost in 2008, [the biggest fall in more than six decades](#).

In the last month alone, Labor data shows that the national unemployment rate rose from 6.8 to 7.2 percent as payrolls across "most major industry sectors" shed 524,000 jobs. According to the BLS, over the last four months of 2008 roughly 1.9 million jobs were eliminated.

But while the legal market contracted in 2008, December did provide somewhat of a silver lining.

Seasonally adjusted BLS data shows that the number of legal services jobs actually increased last month by 1,300.

Unfortunately, [Thacher Proffitt's demise](#) didn't officially become effective until Jan. 1, meaning those numbers aren't likely to be counted by BLS until next month.

*This article first appeared on [The Am Law Daily](#) blog on [AmericanLawyer.com](#).*

