

# Employment Lawyer

Firings, harassment, unpaid wages and discrimination. You act for the worker or for the company, and the two jobs look very different.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$159,670**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$78k to \$352k**

starting to experienced

## TIME TO QUALIFY

**7 to 8 years**

after high school

## DEMAND

**Moderate**

job outlook

## LICENCE NEEDED

**Yes**

regulated job

## WHERE YOU WORK

**Law firms, company legal departments, government agenci...**

## How you get there

- 1 Bachelor's degree, any subject** 4 years  
There is no required pre-law major. Grades and writing ability matter far more than what you studied.
- 2 The LSAT (Law School Admission Test)** Months of preparation  
The admission test accepted by every accredited law school. Your score and your grade point average decide which schools and which scholarships open up.
- 3 Law school** 3 years  
Three years for the juris doctor degree. Take employment discrimination, labor law and a workers' rights clinic if the school has one.
- 4 The bar examination** 2 to 3 months of study  
Taken after graduation in the state where you want to practice, plus a separate ethics exam and a character and fitness background check.
- 5 Associate, then partner, agency or in-house** 5 to 10 years  
You start doing research, taking witness statements and drafting. Real responsibility for your own cases comes in a few years.

## Pros and cons

- + Cases about real people, not about which company owns which asset
- + You can build a career on either side, or switch
- + Government and nonprofit work qualifies for loan forgiveness
- Seven or eight years and often six figures of debt first
- Clients arrive at the worst moment of their working life and you cannot always help
- Plaintiff-side income is lumpy and depends on results

## Optional boosts

Discrimination and harassment. Wages and hours. Wrongful termination and severance. Leave and accommodation.

## Good to know

### Most American jobs are employment at will

In almost every state your boss can fire you for a bad reason, or no reason at all, as long as it is not an illegal reason. Montana is the one state that generally requires good cause after a probation period. Th...

### You usually have to go to the agency first

Before most discrimination lawsuits can be filed, the worker has to bring a charge to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the matching state agency and get a notice letting them sue. Miss th...

### Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Lawyers (23-1011.00)  
United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
United States Department of Labor  
National Conference of Bar Examiners: the Uniform Bar Examination

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/employment-lawyer>



Scan for the full clicker