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# Lawyers and Law Grads: Is a Career with the Federal Government in your Future

## How to Get a Job with the Federal Government

**Capitol Learning Audio Course**  
**MP3**



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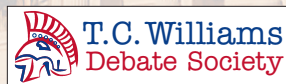
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- Why look at the Federal Government for a legal job
- Benefits versus detriments of working for the Federal Government
- All Federal agencies have lawyer/legal jobs where a law degree is either required or highly desirable
- Each agency does its own recruiting and hiring
- "Honors" programs
- When and when not to use elected officials as references
- Be prepared for a frustrating process that requires persistence
- [USAJOBS.gov](http://USAJOBS.gov)
  - Thinking of law school? Before you borrow any money, see:
    - [Temporary Attorney: The Sweatshop Edition](#)
    - [Big Debt, Small Law](#)
    - [Third Tier Reality](#)
    - [Exposing The Law School Scam](#)

***Faculty Biography***

**JAMES S. GREEN** began his legal career with the Federal Government in 1970, and retired in June 2007, with over 37 years of legal and management experience. He served with the Department of Justice, the Department of the Treasury and, beginning in 1976, in progressively more responsible management and executive positions with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). He was appointed the first career Deputy General Counsel at OPM, responsible for legal analysis and litigation involving Federal human resource issues affecting over nine million Federal employees, retirees, and dependents. Before his retirement, he had direct responsibilities for legal issues involving Federal employee retirement, health benefits, group life insurance, long term care, flexible spending accounts, Federal pay and leave including basic pay, overtime pay, premium pay, law enforcement pay, and executive compensation.

Mr. Green was responsible for overseeing the legal issues involved in the successful privatization of the Federal civilian background investigations program. He was integrally involved in the implementation of civil services reforms arising from the Homeland Security Act and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year

2004. Mr. Green also was responsible for OPM legal issues involving procurement and contracting, the Senior Executive Service, ethics, and the Combined Federal Campaign.

Mr. Green has a Bachelor of Science degree (cum laude) from Boston University and earned his JD from the Georgetown University Law Center. He was appointed a member of the Senior Executive Service in 1986 and was awarded an SES Rank Award of Meritorious Executive by President George W. Bush in 2005.

Currently he serves as the Legal Advisor to the President of The Graduate School. He also serves as a Senior Advisor with Federal Management Partners, Inc., a management consulting organization and as a Senior Ethics Specialist for Ethos, LLC, an ethics consulting and education company.

## FEDERAL LEGAL JOBS

- Why look at the Federal Government for legal jobs:
  - Real world experience quickly
  - Salaries are getting more competitive as law firms cut back
  - More job security
  - Great benefits and retirement
  - Work more independently than in many law firm situations
  - Work on critical issues—national security, cutting edge social programs
  - Public service
- Lawyers serving in legal positions are in Schedule A of the excepted service—part of the civil service where it is impractical to examine (applying standards applicable to competitive service)
- As such, attorneys in Schedule A have almost all protections of the competitive civil service and have the same benefits and pay structure
- There are some 30,000 lawyers employed by the Federal Government in legal positions requiring bar admission
- There are also numerous competitive service positions where a law degree is beneficial or considered desirable by managers, but for which bar membership is not required. Positions such as regulations and rulings drafting offices, paralegals, legal assistants, benefits specialists, tax examiners, legal instrument examiners, hearing and appeals administrative judges, etc.
- These positions are in the competitive service and examinations are more structured and the hiring system is more prearranged. These legal but non-lawyer positions often have career paths that top out at lower pay grades than attorney positions.
- For example, the average pay for licensed lawyers in the Federal Service is about \$121,000 and the average pay for hearing and appeals officers is \$93,500, paralegals is \$77,900, workers comp claims examiners is \$72, 00 and veterans claims examiners is \$59, 200.

- Federal legal jobs are located all over the country. About 35% of the jobs are in the Northeast including DC, 15% are in the Southeast, 12% on the Pacific Coast, with the rest divided in the rest of the country.
- All Federal agencies have lawyer/legal jobs where a law degree is either required or highly desirable. The Social Security Administration (22,700), Department of the Treasury, including IRS (17,600), the Department of Justice (15, 600), the Department of Veterans Affairs (11,900) and the Department of Defense (5400 not including uniformed services attorneys) are among the biggest employers.
- All Federal agencies do their own recruiting and hiring of lawyers. The best way to find out about Federal legal jobs is to go to the website of the agency you are interested in or to the overall Federal job site USAJOBS.gov run by the Office of Personnel Management
- Many agencies with substantial attorney positions have Honors Programs that are very competitive but can result in a quicker hiring decision. Among the agencies that have these programs are:

DOJ This program is currently the only means for obtaining a career (non political) position at DOJ right out of law school. The Office of the US Attorneys does not hire entry level attorneys

CIA-a three year rotational assignment program

FTC

IRS

HUD-only means of hiring entry level counsel year internship followed by an offer of permanent employment

Interior-similar to HUD

Labor- 2 years in appellate/Supreme Court litigation office with successful candidates then assigned to other offices

- All Fed legal jobs are highly competitive as law firms and corporations cut back

James S. Green

- Can be a frustrating process that requires some persistence, walking into offices, using any contacts you have (be careful of political contacts from Congress). Lots of resumes that can appear very fungible to hiring offices. Use Associate GC job as example.
- More and more career orientation. Except for very specific expertise such as DOJ litigation or SEC technical work, much Fed legal work is not as transferable to private sector.
- Retirement benefits add up quickly and while the current retirement is portable, a career is still a good way to go.
- Life style

**Website:**

USAJOBS.gov

**Books**

The Book of U.S. Government Jobs: Where They Are, What's Available & How to Get One (10<sup>th</sup> ed.) by Dennis V. Damp, Brookhaven Press, LLC (1986) ISBN: 0-943641-26-8

Getting a Government Job: The Civil Service Handbook, Therese DeAngelis (Editor), Peterson's a Nelnet Company (2009) ISBN: 0-7689-2796-X

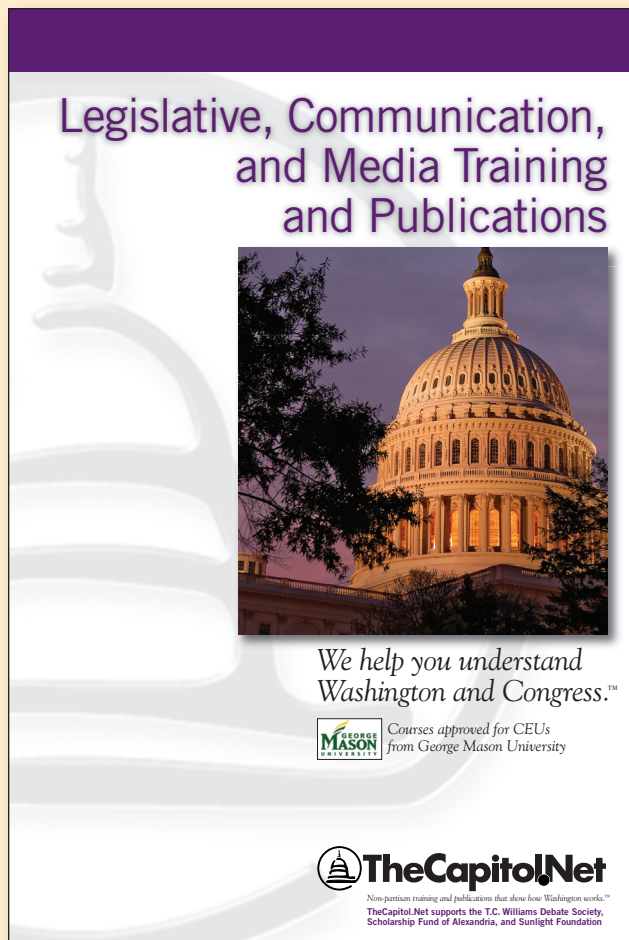
Government Jobs in America: Jobs in U.S. States & Cities and U.S. Federal Agencies with Job Titles, Salaries & Pension Estimates – Why You Want One, What Jobs Are Available, How to Get One by the Editors of Government Jobs News, A Partnerships for Community Publications (2010) ISBN: 933639-57-1

Ten Steps to a Federal Job: Navigating the Federal Job System, Writing Federal Resumes, KSAs and Cover Letters with a Mission by Kathryn K. Troutman and Laura Sachs, The Resume Place, Inc., (2002) ISBN: 0-9647025-3-3

Ten Steps to a Federal Job: How to Land a Job with the Obama Administration (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) by Kathryn Troutman, The Resume Place, Inc. (2009) ISBN: 978-0-9647025-9-2



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