



San Antonio Alamo Area Local Legislative Updates

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Will your job disappear?

Americans will be employed by 2024. However, these new jobs are not likely to be created evenly across all occupations and industries. The nation's middle class has been shrinking at what some call an alarming rate, and even as the nation's job market is expected to grow, demand for many mid- to low-skilled, primarily middle class positions is expected to rapidly decline. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects a loss of hundreds of thousands of such jobs in the coming years due to outsourcing and the development of new technology.

More than 90 million of Americans work in jobs that require little to no prior experience and less than a bachelor's degree. In some cases, a two-year associate's program is all that is required. A low educational requirement and a lack of specialization means these jobs are much more accessible. However, this also means workers in these fields tend to be poorly compensated. The typical worker in the vast majority of the fastest disappearing middle-skill jobs has an annual salary of less than \$40,000.

Another significant downside to these low-skill jobs is that a lack of specialization typically translates to a greater exposure to replacement by new technology. The now-widespread use of computers and the Internet for commerce and communication has resulted in hundreds of thousands of layoffs, from the post office to brick-and-mortar retailers.

The print industry, for example, has been reduced to a shadow of its former self, as consumers have transitioned from newspapers and books to news sites and e-readers. The ranks of printing press operators and print binding and finishing workers — jobs tied to the dwindling popularity of physical print — is projected to decrease by 12.5% and 13.7%, respectively, by 2024.

Automation and computing will also continue to contribute to sharp declines in certain middle-class jobs. The need for computer operators is steadily decreasing, as is demand for typist jobs and office machine operators.

The most dramatic change in employment due to the Internet will be among postal workers. The U.S. Postal Service has seen usage plunge as Americans switch from physical mail to email, and as businesses now conduct transactions online. Between 2005 and 2014, the number of full-time postal workers fell from over 700,000 to 487,000, and the service will likely continue to contract for years.

Postal service mail sorters, processors, and processing machine operators

- > **Projected employment change, 2014-2024:** -33.7%
- > **2014 employment (thousands):** 117.6
- > **2024 projected employment (thousands):** 78.0
- > **Median annual wage:** \$54,520

About 490,000 people are currently working for the U.S. Postal Service. Some 300,000 of these handle mail delivery, and roughly 117,600 work in postal offices sorting and processing the mail. While this occupation does not require education beyond a high school diploma, it pays quite well, with a typical sorter earning nearly \$55,000 annually. Unfortunately, the demand for this relatively well-compensated and accessible job is declining considerably. The BLS projects employment in the field will decline by more than a third within the next decade, even faster than the 26.2% decline among mail carriers. While it may be more difficult to replace mail carriers with a machine, the increased automation in the mail room will likely push out many mail sorters.