



CHALLENGER REPORT

February 2026

[View Challenger Insights here](#)

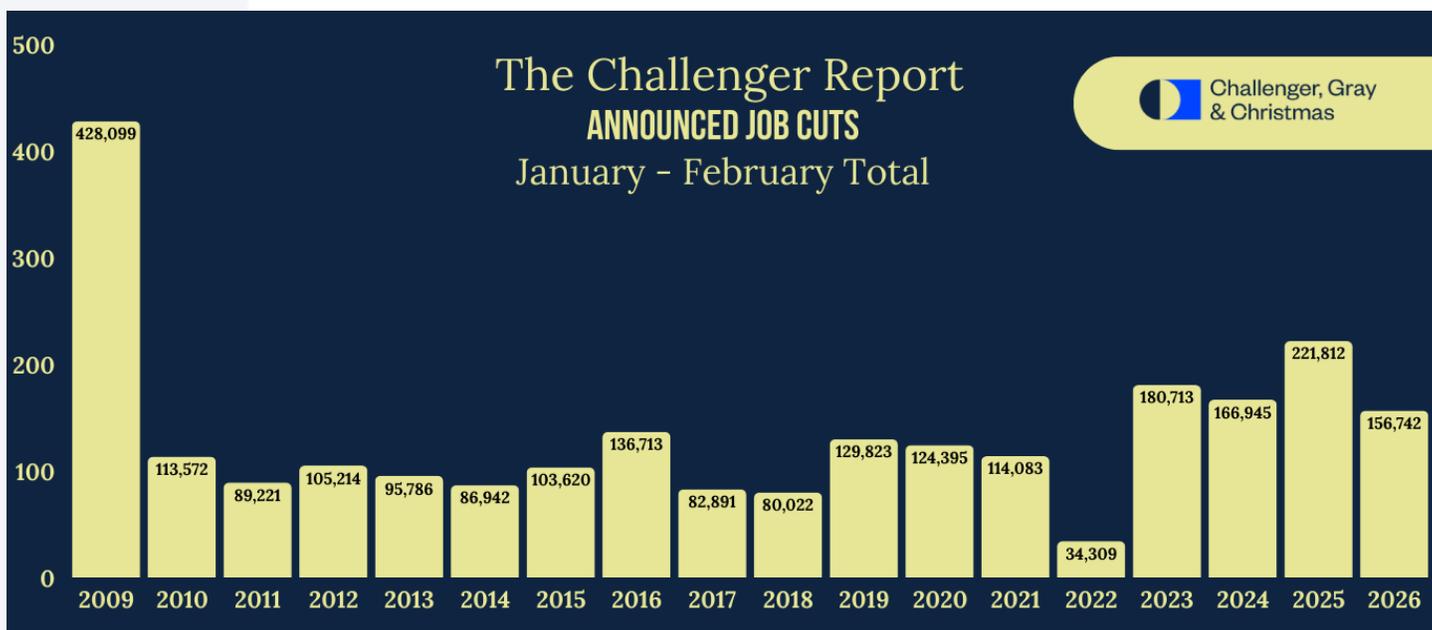
FOR RELEASE AT 7:30 A.M. ET, THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026

LAYOFFS PLUNGE 55% TO 48,307 IN FEBRUARY; HIRING PLANS DOWN 56% YTD

CHICAGO, March 5, 2026 – U.S.-based employers announced 48,307 job cuts in February, down 55% from the 108,435 job cuts in January. It is down 72% from the 172,017 cuts announced during the same month last year, according to a report released Thursday from global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

Through February, employers announced 156,742 job cuts, the lowest January-to-February total since 2022, when 34,309 cuts were recorded in the first two months of the year. It is the fifth-highest January-February total since 2009.

“February’s dip is a nice reprieve from the elevated job cut plans to start the year. With U.S. involvement in a growing war in Iran, the end of Q1 may bring more layoff plans as companies tighten belts amid uncertainty and higher costs,” said Andy Challenger, workplace expert and chief revenue officer for Challenger, Gray & Christmas.



WHICH INDUSTRIES CUT THE MOST IN FEBRUARY?

Technology

Technology announced 11,039 job cuts in February for a total of 33,330 in 2026. That is an increase of 51% from the 22,042 cuts in this sector announced in the same period last year.

"Tech is responding to a number of pressures right now. AI is the big story, but there are also global regulatory concerns, a slowdown in digital advertising driven by tariffs and economic uncertainty, and higher costs to both employ workers and access funding, forcing companies to make difficult decisions," said Challenger.

Education

Education followed with 5,417 job cuts in February for a total of 6,209, a 96% increase from the 3,160 cuts announced through February 2025.

"School districts tend to approve budgets and headcount in February. With declining enrollment, particularly in major cities, federal funding cuts and rising costs, schools are cutting more workers than last year," said Challenger.

Industrial Manufacturing

Last month, companies that provide industrial materials and machinery cut 4,109 jobs for a total of 5,685 in 2026. That is an increase of 143% from the 2,341 cuts announced in this sector through February 2025.

Transportation

Transportation has announced the second-most job cuts this year with 31,702, up 872% from the 3,261 cuts announced during the same period in 2025. The growing conflict in Iran will likely further impact Transportation companies as oil costs rise and supply chains are disrupted.

Healthcare/Products

Healthcare companies and health products manufacturers, including Hospitals, have announced 19,228 job cuts this year, the highest January-February total since 2021, when 20,245 job cuts were recorded in the sector.

Media & News Cuts

The Media industry announced 630 cuts in February for a total of 1,140, up 22% from the 933 cuts announced through February 2025.

**CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC.
JOB CUT ANNOUNCEMENT REPORT**

News, which Challenger tracks as a subset of Media and includes broadcast, digital, and print, has announced 324 job cuts in February, primarily on an announcement from the Washington Post. This is the highest monthly total since May 2025 when 462 News cuts were recorded. So far this year, News has announced 389 job cuts, up 20% from the 324 cuts announced during the same period last year.

WHY ARE COMPANIES CUTTING?

In February, store, unit, or department **Closings** led all reasons for job cuts, with 10,736 announced during the month. **Market and Economic Conditions** followed with 10,114 cuts. **Restructuring** was cited for 9,146 job cuts, while Cost-Cutting accounted for 5,636 planned layoffs.

So far in 2026, **Market and Economic Conditions** lead all reasons year-to-date with 38,506 cuts, followed by **Contract Loss** with 31,416, **Restructuring** with 29,190, and **Closings** with 23,474.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was cited for 4,680 job cuts in February, approximately 10% of total cuts for the month. So far in 2026, AI has been cited for 12,304 job cut announcements, or 8% of job cut plans.

In 2025, companies referenced AI for 54,836 announced layoff plans, 5% of total cuts during the year. Since 2023, when this reason was first tracked, AI has been cited in 91,753 job cut announcements, approximately 3% of all layoff plans announced in that period.

HIRING PLANS IN 2026

Hiring plans rose 140% in February to 12,755 from 5,306 in January. They are down 63% from the 34,580 hiring plans in February 2025. So far this year, employers have announced plans to hire 18,061, down 56% from 40,669 new hires during the same period in 2025.

**CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC.
JOB CUT ANNOUNCEMENT REPORT**

Table 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**TOP FIVE INDUSTRIES
Year To Date**

	2026	2025
Technology	33,330	22,042
Transportation	31,702	3,261
Healthcare/Products	19,228	5,821
Retail	6,448	45,375
Education	6,209	3,160

MONTH BY MONTH TOTALS

	2026	2025
January	108,435	49,795
February	48,307	172,017
March		275,240
April		105,441
May		93,816
June		47,999
July		62,075
August		85,979
September		54,064
October		153,074
November		71,321
December		35,553
TOTAL	156,742	1,206,374

Some reductions are identified by employers as workers who will take early retirement offers or other special considerations to leave the company.

LAYOFF LOCATION

	YTD 2026	YTD 2025
Georgia	32,683	267
California	26,283	28,635
Washington	20,747	5,380
Michigan	20,145	5,431
New York	6,820	17,859

Listings are identified by the location of the layoff or corporate headquarters as stated in announcement.

**CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC.
JOB CUT ANNOUNCEMENT REPORT**

Table 2: JOB CUTS BY INDUSTRY

	25-Feb	26-Jan	26-Feb	YTD 2025	YTD 2026
Aerospace/Defense	314	2,751	563	396	3,314
Apparel	218	2,055	953	851	3,008
Automotive	2,579	2,635	1,756	7,128	4,391
Chemical	68	4,701		1,792	4,701
Construction	371	577	720	798	1,297
Consumer Products	10,625	2,486	2,930	12,947	5,416
Education	3,012	792	5,417	3,160	6,209
Electronics	4,588	1,365	922	4,695	2,287
Energy	753	466	470	1,308	936
Entertainment/Leisure	2,887	1,136	2,103	3,884	3,239
Financial	6,894	3,635	648	11,423	4,283
FinTech	306	60	110	1,143	170
Food	1,544	1,354	2,460	4,287	3,814
Government	62,242	1,097	46	62,530	1,143
Health Care/Products	2,945	17,107	2,121	5,821	19,228
Industrial Goods	1,252	1,576	4,109	2,341	5,685
Insurance	608	712	2,265	1,936	2,977
Legal				0	0
Media	309	510	630	933	1,140
Mining	165	320	885	165	1,205
Non-Profit	1,519	948	285	1,573	1,233
Pharmaceutical	256	377	645	585	1,022
Real Estate	333	61	20	451	81
Retail	38,956	3,193	3,255	45,375	6,448
Services	8,874	2,523	1,621	13,804	4,144
Technology	14,554	22,291	11,039	22,042	33,330
Telecommunications	178	78	576	445	654
Transportation	1,849	31,243	459	3,261	31,702
Utility	444	47		655	47
Warehousing	3,374	2,339	1,299	6,083	3,638
TOTAL	172,017	108,435	48,307	221,812	156,742

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas

**CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC.
JOB CUT ANNOUNCEMENT REPORT**

Table 3: JOB CUTS BY REGION, STATE

EAST	Feb-26	YTD 2026	YTD 2025
Connecticut	2,458	3,680	434
Delaware		0	0
Dist. of Columbia	300	1,300	61,795
Maine		190	0
Maryland	397	535	2,284
Massachusetts	1,052	2,608	4,070
New Hampshire	90	90	0
New Jersey	1,639	3,305	16,918
New York	1,925	6,820	17,859
Pennsylvania	956	2,488	3,661
Rhode Island		38	38
Vermont	193	212	50
TOTAL	9,010	21,266	107,109

MIDWEST	Feb-26	YTD 2026	YTD 2025
Illinois	893	2,022	3,392
Indiana	172	435	131
Iowa	430	877	911
Kansas	72	144	331
Michigan	431	20,145	5,431
Minnesota	570	852	2,079
Missouri	314	944	1,436
Nebraska		294	4,150
Ohio	985	3,078	22,592
Wisconsin	326	892	1,053
TOTAL	4,193	29,683	41,506

WEST	Feb-26	YTD 2026	YTD 2025
Alaska	500	500	0
Arizona	68	399	6,465
California	17,997	26,283	28,635
Colorado	130	1,563	1,383
Hawaii	334	673	221
Idaho	487	628	23
Montana		0	93
Nevada	2,000	2,004	1,136
New Mexico		0	0
North Dakota		140	0
Oklahoma	50	53	904
Oregon	1,237	3,208	56
South Dakota		0	0
Texas	606	1,560	12,916
Utah	115	183	57
Washington	1,221	20,747	5,380
Wyoming		0	0
TOTAL	24,745	57,941	57,269

SOUTH	Feb-26	YTD 2026	YTD 2025
Alabama	667	746	677
Arkansas		0	325
Florida	4,464	5,472	5,987
Georgia	1,268	32,683	267
Kentucky	568	703	1,523
Louisiana		85	0
Mississippi		0	151
North Carolina	1,148	2,151	2,083
South Carolina	775	1,619	218
Tennessee	340	1,627	4,202
Virginia	599	2,036	330
West Virginia	530	730	165
TOTAL	10,359	47,852	15,928

**CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC.
JOB CUT ANNOUNCEMENT REPORT**

Table 4: JOB CUTS BY REASON

	Feb-26	YTD 2026	Full Year 2025
Market/Economic Conditions	10,114	38,506	253,206
Contract Loss	632	31,416	16,797
Restructuring	9,146	29,190	133,611
Closing	10,736	23,474	191,480
Artificial Intelligence	4,680	12,304	54,836
Cost-Cutting	5,636	9,468	81,392
Acquisition/Merger	3,342	3,841	25,622
Demand Downturn	1,007	3,179	9,802
Technological Update (automation)	1,353	1,353	0
EV Tax Credit Expiration		1,100	7,648
DOGE Downstream Impact		826	20,976
Financial Loss	733	787	7,524
Relocation (International)	341	341	20
Bankruptcy	304	304	38,883
Tariffs		294	7,908
No Reason Provided	283	283	21,918
Relocation (Domestic)		55	4,847
Consolidation		21	1,590
COVID Recovery		0	705
COVID-19		0	36
DOGE Actions		0	293,753
Federal Cuts/Shutdown		0	9,058
Government Regulations		0	140
Labor Dispute		0	1,389
Natural Disaster		0	935
Outsourcing Operations to Another US Company		0	272
Plant Upgrades		0	512
Voluntary Severance/Buyouts		0	1,295
Technological Update (possible AI)		0	20,219
TOTAL	48,307	156,742	1,206,374

**CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC.
JOB CUT ANNOUNCEMENT REPORT**

Table 5: QUARTER BY QUARTER

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
1989	9,850	10,100	24,085	67,250	111,285
1990	107,052	87,686	49,104	72,205	316,047
1991	110,056	76,622	147,507	221,107	555,292
1992*	110,815	85,486	151,849	151,850	500,000
1993	170,615	84,263	194,486	165,822	615,186
1994	192,572	107,421	117,706	98,370	516,069
1995	97,716	114,583	89,718	137,865	439,882
1996	168,695	101,818	91,784	114,850	477,147
1997	134,257	51,309	95,930	152,854	434,350
1998	139,140	131,303	161,013	246,339	677,795
1999	210,521	173,027	173,181	118,403	675,132
2000	141,853	81,568	168,875	221,664	613,960
2001	406,806	370,556	594,326	585,188	1,956,876
2002	478,905	292,393	269,090	426,435	1,466,823
2003	355,795	274,737	241,548	364,346	1,236,426
2004	262,840	209,895	251,585	315,415	1,039,735
2005	287,134	251,140	245,378	288,402	1,072,054
2006	255,878	180,580	202,771	200,593	839,822
2007	195,986	197,513	194,095	180,670	768,264
2008	200,656	275,292	287,142	460,903	1,223,993
2009	578,510	318,165	240,233	151,122	1,288,030
2010	181,183	116,494	113,595	118,701	529,973
2011	130,749	115,057	233,258	127,018	606,082
2012	143,094	139,997	102,910	137,361	523,362
2013	145,041	113,891	128,452	121,667	509,051
2014	121,341	124,693	117,374	119,763	483,171
2015	140,214	147,458	205,759	105,079	598,510
2016	180,920	132,834	121,858	91,303	526,915
2017	126,201	100,799	94,478	97,292	418,770
2018	140,379	104,800	120,879	172,601	538,659
2019	190,410	140,577	133,882	127,687	592,556
2020	346,683	1,238,364	497,215	222,493	2,304,755
2021	144,686	67,975	52,560	56,749	321,970
2022	55,696	77,515	76,284	154,329	363,824
2023	270,416	187,793	146,305	117,163	721,677
2024	257,254	177,391	174,597	152,116	761,358
2025	497,052	247,256	202,118	259,948	1,206,374
AVG	207,756	181,307	176,025	187,106	

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas

**CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC.
JOB CUT ANNOUNCEMENT REPORT**

Table 6: ANNOUNCED HIRING PLANS

By Month

	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
January	5,306	6,089	5,376	32,764	77,630	72,063	23,229	74,040	41,890	136,501
February	12,755	34,580	10,317	28,830	215,127	146,403	88,202	15,279	139,925	25,765
March		13,198	21,102	9,044	105,224	97,767	824,610	96,368	14,525	127,006
April		16,191	9,802	23,310	88,622	76,345	285,639	258,302	13,842	61,537
May		9,683	4,236	7,885	126,083	49,118	38,981	8,663	9,889	77,447
June		3,191	19,087	13,629	102,897	110,093	75,454	11,946	13,504	40,095
July		3,200	3,676	12,774	25,506	18,281	246,507	22,316	9,823	88,142
August		1,494	6,101	7,744	41,985	94,004	160,411	24,937	17,274	14,530
September		117,313	403,893	590,353	380,014	939,790	929,860	459,689	595,997	422,726
October		283,138	266,743	35,202	237,380	52,042	255,198	190,835	130,338	37,387
November		9,074	11,621	15,566	30,203	6,527	185,504	19,063	15,422	61,300
December		10,496	7,999	3,022	51,693	89,984	77,267	26,313	15,999	8,218
TOTAL	18,061	507,647	769,953	780,123	1,482,364	1,752,417	3,190,862	1,207,751	1,018,428	1,100,654
YTD		40,669	15,693	61,594	292,757	218,466	111,431	89,319	181,815	162,266
Monthly Average		42,304	64,163	65,010	123,530	146,035	265,905	100,646	84,869	91,721

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas

**CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC.
JOB CUT ANNOUNCEMENT REPORT**

Table 7: ANNOUNCED HIRING PLANS

INDUSTRY	26-Feb	YTD 2026	YTD 2025
Aerospace/Defense	1,200	1,320	1,651
Apparel		0	0
Automotive	8,300	8,318	4,831
Chemical		0	0
Construction		154	0
Consumer Products	450	865	690
Education		10	0
Electronics		0	175
Energy	200	630	650
Entertainment/Leisure	90	190	28,000
Financial	300	300	75
FinTech		0	0
Food		100	0
Government	315	715	84
Health Care/Products		120	150
Industrial Goods	191	970	553
Insurance		2,500	0
Legal		0	0
Media		0	0
Mining		0	0
Non-Profit		0	0
Pharmaceutical		0	0
Real Estate		0	0
Retail	450	450	0
Services	359	359	45
Technology	150	150	3,225
Telecommunications		0	100
Transportation	500	500	0
Utility	250	410	250
Warehousing		0	190
TOTAL	12,755	18,061	40,669

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas