

building a better legal profession

--- a national grassroots organization ---

<http://refirmation.wordpress.com>

Law Students Building a Better Legal Profession Releases New Chicago Rankings

Washington, D.C., October 10, 2007 — [Law Students Building a Better Legal Profession](#) today released a series of reports ranking large law firms in Chicago and other major legal markets on gender composition, diversity, billable hours, and pro bono participation. The new documents highlight major differences in large law firms and will enable law students to make more informed choices about their entry into the profession. The rankings are available online at <http://refirmation.wordpress.com>.

The national grassroots organization of law students will release its report at a press conference on **Wednesday, October 10 at 12:30 pm**. The event will occur in the Zenger Room (13th Floor) of the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Representatives from several law schools, including Harvard, Yale, and Stanford, will be in attendance.

"Most students think big firms are indistinguishable. But they're not," said co-President Andrew Bruck, a 3L at Stanford Law School. "Our report helps students see the differences between their potential employers. There's a tremendous market for law students, and markets rely on information. By providing this information to students, we're helping students make better informed choices about where they want to work after graduation."

Here are brief findings from the rankings:

- *Gender Composition*: At all firms surveyed in Chicago,¹ women are significantly less represented as partners than as associates. At **Sonnenschein**, which has the highest percentage of female partners in Chicago, women make up 29.8% of all partners. At **Vedder Price**, which has the lowest percentage of female partners in Chicago, women are only 12.4% of all partners.
- *Low Diversity Partnership Rates*: Of the 26 Chicago firms included in the report, eight do not have a single Hispanic partner, seven do not have a single African-American partner, and four do not have a single Asian-American partner.
- *Diversity Report Card*: Looking at all forms of diversity (gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation), several firms are significantly more diverse

¹ The report includes all Chicago offices that employ more than 100 attorneys and which completed a single-office questionnaire in the February 1, 2007 NALP survey.

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than their peers: **Sonnenschein** leads with a 2.9 “diversity point average”; **Drinker Biddle** and **Jenner & Block** are close behind. At the bottom of the list are five law firms – **Holland & Knight**, **Skadden**, **Vedder Price**, **McGuireWoods**, and **Jones Day**– that do not represent the diversity of law students or our profession.

- *LGBT Representation:* **Jenner & Block** stands out among Chicago law firms with seven partners and six associates openly LGBT. However, **Skadden** has the highest percentage of out partners (7.1%) and **Latham & Watkins** has the highest percentage of out associates (5.2%). Six firms do not have a single out partner or associate – **Bell, Boyd**; **Jones Day**; **McGuireWoods**; **Neal, Gerber’ Ungaretti & Harris**; and **Vedder Price**.
- *Pro Bono Participation:* Firms vary in their commitment to pro bono work. At **DLA Piper**, 89% of partners and 91% of associates contribute to pro bono, placing it at the top. The firm with the lowest reported pro bono participation is **Skadden**, where only 27% of partners and 51% of associates volunteer their legal skills in some way. Nine firms did not respond to this question, which suggests that some of them may exhibit lower participation. **Wildman, Harrold**; **Baker & McKenzie**; and **Foley & Lardner** have the lowest average hours committed to pro bono work per year – each of the three firms contributed 25 hours or fewer per attorney last year.

Full results are available online at <http://refirmation.wordpress.com>.

“This pathbreaking research sends a message to America's law firms that is loud and clear: the best law students want to work at the firms where they have a fair chance at promotion, and where it is possible to work hard and enjoy a family life,” said Michele Landis Dauber, Professor of Law at Stanford. “It's about time students collected this kind of basic information about law firms and began to vote with their feet.”

“This is an extraordinarily impressive effort to shine much needed light on law firms’ commitment to diversity, not just in principle but in practice,” said Deborah L. Rhode, McFarland Professor of Law and Director of the Center on Ethics, Stanford University and Former Chair, ABA Commission on Women in the Profession. “This should be the starting point of a constructive conversation between firms, law schools, law students, and bar organizations about how to create a just and equitable professional culture.”

“Firms have to do more than compete on salary alone. Whether the metric is gender equity, billable hour expectations, or attrition rates, lawyers will be attracted to high-performing firms, and avoid firms unresponsive to their priorities,” said Law Students Building a Better Legal Profession co-Founder Andrew Canter. “We look forward to distributing these rankings to our members and law students across the country.”

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Additional praise for the report can be found on Page 4 of this press release.

About Law Students Building a Better Legal Profession

Law Students Building a Better Legal Profession is a national grassroots organization made up of law students from across the country. Its 150+ members are committed to a legal profession devoted to effective and efficient client service, to lawyers as people, and to the roots of our profession in service. The organization encourages law students to use their market power to support law firms taking concrete steps toward a more sustainable legal profession. It has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *National Law Journal*, *Legal Times*, and the *San Francisco Daily Journal*, among other publications.

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Praise for Building a Better Legal Profession

“Building a Better Legal Profession has provided us with a resource that has great promise. By comparing the largest law firms in the top legal markets, the students have put a spotlight on the key issues of demographic diversity, pro bono participation and hours billed, which are such important indicators of the heart and soul of a firm. It is particularly noteworthy that these law students are showing initiative and demonstrating a commitment to improving the profession and career options for themselves and for all those who will come after them. These enterprising law students have an enormous potential to be a force for good and for positive change – now and throughout their careers. I commend them for their dedication and hard work.”

-- Marcia D. Greenberger, Co-President, National Women’s Law Center

“This report confirms that the legal profession has a long way to go in terms of becoming more diverse and fully reflective of our society. We hope that this report can also serve as a springboard for devising strategies that increase minority representation in law firms.”

-- L. Jared Boyd, National Attorney General, National Black Law Students Association

“We are proud to earn this recognition from Law Students Building a Better Legal Profession. A commitment to workplace diversity is essential in attracting and retaining exceptional attorneys out of law school and to ensuring the success of law firms. It will continue to be a top priority at Orrick.”

-- Ralph Baxter, chairman and CEO of Orrick, which ranked highly in overall diversity in the New York market.

“These reports are extremely important. Even the best intentioned law firms can have gaps between policy and actual practice and objective numbers can help point out those gaps. Law firms as well as law students will benefit from better information that is widely available.”

-- Cynthia Thomas Calvert, Co-Director, Project for Attorney Retention

“Law students are in a powerful position to positively influence the legal profession by making educated choices early in their careers about the kinds of law firms for which they want to work. Too often, students don’t have the information to really evaluate what a firm prioritizes in hiring and retaining lawyers. This program has the potential to remedy that problem and to give law students the tools to begin their careers in environments where they will be welcome and encouraged while getting to do important, challenging work.”

-- Kate Reilly, Vice President, Harvard Women's Law Association. Ms. Reilly can be reached at kreilly (at) law.harvard.edu or 973-886-6669.