

**National Benchmark Looms Near for % Minority Law Partners in Columbus;
Area Law Firms, CBA Strengthen Focus on Phase 2: Retention and Promotion**

COLUMBUS – Six years into an historic pledge to build a more diverse legal community in central Ohio, area firms have reached a benchmark, hitting the national average of 5% minority partners for the first time, the Columbus Bar Association reports today.

“We are making slow but certain progress towards our goal of building enduring diversity in Columbus law firms. Although our actual goal is to exceed the national average, hitting this benchmark for minority partners is proof that our efforts are moving in the right direction,” said Nelson E Genshaft, CBA President. “As we continue the second five-year commitment of our Managing Partner’s Diversity Initiative, firms generally agree that recruitment has been successful, but retention and promotion efforts require more investment and, frankly, more learning.”

Annual survey results from the 23 participating law firms show significant increases in minority attorneys at every level compared to 2000, the first year statistics were collected. Survey statistics include:

- From 2000 to 2007, minority attorneys overall increased from 3.8% to 7.1% of all attorneys.
- From 2000 to 2007, the number of African American attorneys increased 89%, from 29 to 55, going from 2.34% to 3.91% of the total attorneys.
- From 2000 to 2007, the number of Asian/Pacific Islander attorneys increased 175%, from 12 to 33, going from .97% to 2.35% of the total attorneys.
- In 2007, minority partners increased from 3.8% to 4.6% of all partners, approaching the national 5% average for the first time.
- In 2006, 31% of summer associates were minority law students.
- From 2000 to 2006, minority student enrollment has increased at local law schools from 15% to 18%. Graduation rates have also increased.
- In 2006, attrition rates were higher for minority attorneys than majority attorneys – 13.7% compared to 9.9%.
- In 2006, participating law firms donated \$88,500 in program fees earmarked for the four focus areas: retention, recruitment, law firm culture, and infrastructure. This is the first year firms were asked to make payments to support the efforts.

“It took six years of concerted effort for Columbus to reach the national average of diversity in partners, and as it turns out, that notable feat appears to have been the relatively easy part,” said Michael Zatezalo, Managing Director of Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter, and chairman of the Managing Partner’s Diversity Initiative Advisory Board. “The retention challenge is multi-faceted and ongoing; requiring us to find ways to change our organizations so minority attorneys – and all attorneys – can be successful and feel satisfied enough to stay.”

Significant diversity events that received first time program funding in 2006 – 2007 include:

- **Retention:** Two CLE diversity training courses for management/leadership of minority attorneys each receiving Ohio Supreme Court approval, tailored for the Columbus legal market.
- **Infrastructure:** Supported the establishment of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association by being a major sponsor of the inaugural event.
- **Recruitment:** Major sponsor of John Mercer Langston Bar Association Conference for Aspiring African American Attorneys.
- **Recruitment:** Creating and implementing upcoming activities for the 20th reunion of the CBA's Minority Clerkship Program in July.

In addition to publishing diversity results annually, participating firms also gather for an annual seminar to discuss progress and challenges for the upcoming year. This year's seminar for the first time featured a two-part lecture by nationally known consultant Werten Bellamy Jr. from D.C. Stakeholders, Inc. The morning session was geared for managing partners, and a new afternoon session was programmed for attorneys and summer clerks of color.

“We are deeply committed to increasing diversity, and that means we are deeply committed to the issue of retention. We have the will to find the way, knowing that our firms and our community stand to benefit,” Zatezalo said.

Background: The Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative began in 2000 as a unique collaboration joined by twenty two law firms, the John Mercer Langston Bar Association, the Columbus City Attorney, the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law and Capital University Law School, in addition to the CBA. The participants made a 5-year commitment to take specific action steps designed to recruit, hire, train, retain and promote minority attorneys, and create an environment conducive to success. Last year, the participants renewed their commitment, agreeing to significant action steps in four areas over the next five years: retention, infrastructure, law firm culture and recruitment.

The CBA's effort is seen as a model program for bar associations across the country, and has been recognized locally, statewide and nationally, including receiving the 2003 “Diversity Champion” award from United Way, the 2005 “Achievement Award” from the Ohio Society of Association Executives, and the 2003 “Partnership Award” from the American Bar Association.

Participants in the 2006-2010 Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative are: Bailey Cavaleri LLC, Baker & Hostetler LLP, Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP, Bricker & Eckler LLP, Buckingham Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP, Carlile Patchen & Murphy LLP, Carpenter & Lipps LLP, Chester Willcox & Saxbe LLP, Crabbe Brown & James LLP, Hahn Loeser + Parks LLP, Isaac Brant Ledman & Teetor LLP, Jones Day, Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter, Lane Alton & Horst, LLC, Luper Neidenthal & Logan LPA, Maguire & Schneider LLP, Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP, Reminger & Reminger Co., LPA, Schottenstein Zox & Dunn Co., LPA, Squire Sanders & Dempsey LLP, Thompson Hine LLP, Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease LLP, Wiles Boyle Burkholder & Bringardner

Co., LPA, Capital University Law School, Columbus Bar Association, John Mercer Langston Bar Association, Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, Columbus City Attorney.