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**Twice as Many Minority Attorneys Find Opportunities in Columbus Law Firms;
CBA Reports Progress with Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative**

COLUMBUS -- Four years into a historic public commitment to increase the racial diversity of Columbus law firms, the number of minority attorneys has more than doubled, and increases in minority lawyers are seen at all levels in every size law firm, the Columbus Bar Association reports today.

“Committed action to recruit, retain and promote talented minority attorneys has made a profound difference in the opportunities available in Columbus, and our survey metrics reflect that in a very encouraging way,” said Kim Shumate, President of the Columbus Bar.

Added Rich Simpson, Managing Partner at Bricker & Eckler, and Chairman of the Diversity Initiative Advisory Board, “The word is getting out to law schools and law students across the country: open, inclusive Columbus is a great place to start your career. Further, our firms are changing to make the organizations smarter, healthier and better places to work for all attorneys.”

According to the 2005 Managing Partner's Diversity Initiative survey:

- Since 2000, the number of minority attorneys has more than doubled, beginning at 46 (comprising 3.7% of the total attorney population) to the current 109 (comprising 7.65%).
- While the number of all attorneys has grown 15% since 2000 (186 attorneys), the number of minority attorneys has grown 137% (63 attorneys.)
- The numbers of minority attorneys at the partnership level has increased from 13 to 33, and associates from 31 to 70. Partners are considered critical recruitment magnets, as they participate in the leadership of the firm.
- Diversity levels increased in firms of every size since 2000. Small firms went from 1.3% to 7% minority attorneys (3 to 23). Medium-sized firms went from 5.8% to 10% minority attorneys (16 to 31). Large law firms went from 3.7% to 7% minority attorneys (27 to 55).

Two years ago, the American Bar Association presented the Columbus Bar Association with a national “Partnership Award” for this program, in recognition of exemplary effort to increase diversity in the legal profession.

In addition to publishing diversity results annually, the participating firms also gather for a seminar to discuss progress and challenges for the upcoming year. This year's seminar, on Thursday, May 12, features Dennis Archer, the immediate past President of the American Bar Association, and the former mayor of Detroit.

“There is a good business reason for diversity when you consider that our clients today are engaged in global competition in a global marketplace. Those firms who fail to embrace diversity will lose clients and thus have a reduced source of income. So it is quite appropriate that the law firms of the Columbus Bar Association work together as we embrace diversity and the change of the American population,” Archer said.

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Simpson noted that retention – an increasing challenge for all attorneys – will be an important topic for the upcoming year, as significant recruitment strategies have been successful.

Background:

The Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative is a unique collaboration joined by twenty two law firms, the John Mercer Langston Bar Association – comprised primarily of African American attorneys – the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law and Capital University Law School, in addition to the CBA.

The diversity plan was spurred in part by a 2000 survey that showed of 1,237 attorneys in participating firms, only 2 percent were African American, and less than 1 percent were other minorities. The resulting initiative committed each of the participating firms to specific action steps designed to recruit, hire, train, retain and promote minority attorneys, and create an environment conducive to success. The participating firms range in size from more than 200 attorneys to at least 15.

While each firm develops programs that meet their own specific management structures and cultures, some of the common successful strategies are:

- Sharpening recruiting efforts to include historically minority institutions;
- Reevaluating hiring criteria to make sure they don't exclude talented minority lawyers whose promise might be reflected in other ways beyond simple comparisons by the number;
- Changing corporate culture through ongoing sensitivity training and other programs for Managing Partners on down;
- Appointing a diversity coordinator;
- Communicating a commitment to diversity in websites and marketing materials;
- Developing mentoring programs that bridge generational as well as racial and cultural gaps;
- Adding winter internships as well as summer internships, allowing more time to build relationships with law students.
- Increasing 'lateral hires,' that is, lawyers already in practice in other sectors.

The CBA's effort is seen as a model program across the country, and is being considered by several other bar associations. Participants in the Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative are: Bailey Cavalieri, Baker & Hostetler, Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff, Blaugrund Herbert & Martin, Bricker & Eckler, Buckingham Doolittle & Burroughs, Carpenter & Lipps, Carlile Patchen & Murphy, Chester Willcox & Saxbe, Crabbe Brown & James, Isaac Brant Ledman & Teetor, Jones Day, Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter, Lane Alton & Horst, Luper Neidenthal & Logan, Maguire & Schneider, Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, Schottenstein Zox & Dunn, Squire Sanders & Dempsey, Thompson Hine, Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease, and Wiles Boyle Burkholder & Bringardner. Additional participants include: Capital University Law School, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, John Mercer Langston Bar Association.