



National Association of Women Lawyers
The Voice of Women in the Law™

For Immediate Release

Date October 26, 2009

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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS RELEASES FOURTH ANNUAL
SURVEY**

**Provocative Data Show Women Disproportionately Affected by Dismissals of Part-Time Attorneys;
Confirm Few Women Among Top Firm Rainmakers**

CHICAGO: Today, the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL®) and the NAWL Foundation® released the results of the fourth annual Survey on Retention and Promotion of Women in Law Firms. The Survey is the only national study of the nation's 200 largest law firms which annually tracks the progress of women lawyers at all levels of private practice, including the most senior positions, and collects data on firms as a whole rather than from a subset of individual lawyers.

"The 2009 NAWL Survey explores new territory, including the impact on women of the unprecedented downsizing of major U.S. law firms, and the frequency with which women are represented in the top ranks of "rainmakers," those lawyers who generate the most new business for their firms," said NAWL President Lisa Gilford, Partner with Alston & Bird LLP. "Each year's Survey helps us drill down further into the data, with the goal of learning why women's advancement in law has been stalled and what can be done to enable more women to succeed."

NAWL Foundation President Stephanie Scharf, Partner at Schoeman Updike Kaufman & Scharf in Chicago, stated: "The NAWL Survey continues to break new ground in identifying both the opportunities and obstacles facing women attorneys seeking to advance in private practice. In these challenging economic times it may be unrealistic to expect women to make significant headway; however, it is particularly disappointing to see the dearth of women rainmakers, a role that is essential for success in private practice. It was also disconcerting to see major firms terminating a disproportionate number of women who were practicing part-time. Part-time practice for women attorneys, as for other women professionals, typically lasts only a few years. Terminating these women can only further thin the ranks of talented women who could become equity partners and law firm leaders in the future."

The 2009 Survey underscores that women are significantly under-represented in the upper levels of law firms. The large majority of women who start as associates in firms do not advance to equity partnership and even fewer become law firm leaders. Male lawyers are the most powerful and best compensated members of firms. Men hold the vast majority of ownership shares, dominate firm governing committees and represent the overwhelming number of major rainmakers in firms.

Highlights of the Survey include the following findings:

- The travails of the current economic downturn have disproportionately affected women lawyers. Although men and women lawyers generally lost their jobs in numbers commensurate to their percentages as associates, counsel and income partners, women constituted almost all of the terminated attorneys who practiced on a part-time basis.
- Women attorneys' success in generating business lags significantly behind that of their male counterparts. Nearly half of major U.S. firms indicated that they have no women among their top ten rainmakers, while another third reported that only one of their top ten rainmakers was a woman. Interestingly, there is a correlation between the number of top female rainmakers and the compensation difference between male and female lawyers: the more women rainmakers a firm has, the less of a compensation differential exists.
- At every stage of practice, men continue to out-earn women lawyers, although the magnitude of the difference has declined in the last year. Male equity partners earn on average almost \$66,000 per year more than female equity partners.
- The market for lateral partners, already an important avenue for advancement for both men and women, has continued to be robust in spite of the faltering economy. In general, making a lateral move is advantageous for both women and men, although the data show that men are far more likely than women to change firms. Firm structure may affect the calculus of whether a lateral move is warranted, since one-tier firms are more likely to promote both men and women from within.
- For over 20 years women have graduated from law schools and started careers in private practice at roughly the same rate as men, yet women continue to be markedly under-represented in the leadership ranks of firms. Women constitute fewer than 16% of equity partners, only 6% of firm managing partners, and barely 15% of the members of a firm's highest governing committee – percentages which have not changed from 2008 and have barely advanced since the Survey began exploring these data in 2006.
- 70% of large law firms employ someone who has the primary responsibility to oversee the firm's diversity program and implement its goals. There is wide variation in both staffing and approach. Only about half of the positions are staffed by persons possessing a law degree (whether or not they practice law). Nearly two-thirds of the firms report having one or more full-time diversity positions, while one-quarter report staffing these positions on a part-time basis, and 12% of the firms indicate that the responsibility for implementing diversity goals is overseen by a committee.

The full NAWL Survey Report can be accessed by visiting:

<http://www.nawl.org/Assets/Documents/2009+Survey.pdf>. In addition, NAWL's 2008 report from its National Leadership Summit, Actions for Advancing Women Into Law Firm Leadership, <http://www.nawl.org/Assets/Summit+Report+2008.pdf>, provides an excellent list of recommended actions for law firms committed to advancing women into leadership positions.

Since 1899, the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL®) has been committed to fostering diversity and advancing women in the legal profession. NAWL is the only national women's bar association with individual and organizational members nationwide, including law firms, law firm attorneys, corporations, in-house counsel, government attorneys, law schools, and law school professors. Please visit www.nawl.org.