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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS RELEASES THIRD ANNUAL SURVEY  
Groundbreaking Data Reveal Impact of Lateral Moves, Firm Structure on Women**

CHICAGO: Today, the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL)® and the NAWL Foundation® released the results of NAWL's third national 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 2008 Survey shows that women continue to be markedly under-represented in the upper levels of law firms. The majority of women who start as associates in firms do not reach the position of equity partners; law firm leaders, including governing committees and managing partners, are overwhelmingly male.

"The 2008 NAWL Survey contains new comparative data in three areas--the status of women of color in law firms, the status of women in different law firm structures, and the lateral movement of women attorneys," said NAWL President Lisa Horowitz, Senior Manager of Professional Development at McDermott Will & Emery LLP. "A large majority of AMLAW 200 law firms responded to this Survey. NAWL thanks these firms for their participation and commitment to the advancement of women attorneys."

Survey Committee Chair Stephanie Scharf, Partner at Schoeman Updike Kaufman & Scharf in Chicago, noted: "The NAWL Survey continues to provide insightful data about the opportunities for women to advance in private practice. We have seen some progress but we continue to find a large gap between the available pipeline of women and the number who are promoted to equity partner and higher positions of law firm leadership."

Highlights of the Survey findings include the following facts:

- For more than two decades women have graduated from law schools and started careers in private practice at about the same rate as men, yet women continue to be markedly under-represented in the leadership ranks of firms, accounting for fewer than 16% of equity partners. Only about 6% of law firms report that they have a woman in the highest leadership position of managing partner. The highest governing committee in large firms typically counts only 1 or 2 women members even though governing committees average 11 to 12 members.

- The percentage of women lawyers of color is greatest in the associate category (11%) as compared to women of color who are non-equity partners (3%) or equity partners (1.4%). These numbers point to the greater difficulty that women of color face in moving up the law firm ranks, compared to white lawyers or male lawyers of color.
- The market for lateral partners impacts promotion to equity partner. Laterals account for roughly two-thirds of the women and three-quarters of the men who were newly promoted to an equity position. A startling 31% of new equity partners were recent laterals, suggesting that they were specifically recruited or negotiated for an equity position. The data belie the traditional notion that largely homegrown attorneys are promoted to equity partner.
- The Survey has captured data on a newly identified category of law firm: the “mixed-tier” firm. In the mixed-tier firm, all “equity” partners are required to contribute capital to the firm but some of them are paid as if they were income partners. About 15% of the nation’s largest firms are mixed-tier firms and preliminary data indicate that women have a somewhat lower chance of advancing to equity partner in mixed-tier firms.
- There is evidence that more recent women graduates are being promoted to equity partner at a somewhat greater rate. These numbers show, however, that even in the best of circumstances, women are promoted to equity partner at only about half the rate as men.
- At every stage of practice, men out-earn women lawyers, a finding that is consistent with NAWL’S previous Surveys and data from other sources. Male equity partners earn on average over \$87,000 a year more than female equity partners.
- Nearly 97% of large firms have implemented women’s initiatives, which provide a combination of programs on professional development, networking, mentoring and/or business development. Given that women’s initiatives and formal programs for business development skills are relatively new activities in firms, it is too early to say whether these various programs will enhance the level of business development among women lawyers.

The full NAWL survey can be viewed by visiting:

<http://www.nawl.org/Assets/Documents/2008+Survey.pdf> In addition, NAWL's July 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](http://www.nawl.org).