

NEWS RELEASE



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DIVERSITY INITIATIVE ADOPTED BY CHICAGO BAR ASSOCIATION

(CHICAGO, ILL. April 11, 2006)--Saying that the pursuit of justice requires the legal profession to fully reflect all members of society, the Board of Managers of the Chicago Bar Association (CBA) passed the 2006 Diversity Initiative on March 21, 2006. The document requires signatories, who are law firms, corporate and public interest law departments, and government agencies, to:

- 1) adopt general principles of inclusion and diversity in employment practices
- 2) pursue goals for hiring, retention and promotion of minorities and
- 3) participate in programs to measure their progress in achieving these goals.

Sharon Jones, Chair of the CBA Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity, wrote the language of the document. "I'm hopeful that the Chicago legal community will use the Initiative as a catalyst for increasing diversity in the profession," she said.

"A number of large cities, such as New York and San Francisco, have used similar initiatives to draw attention to the importance of diversity and to attempt to achieve collective solutions. I'm hopeful this will do the same thing in Chicago," Jones, who is President of Jones Diversity Group, LLC, said.

The Initiative defines diversity as ". . . an inclusive concept (that) encompasses race,

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color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and many other aspects of diversity.” The drafters hope that a greater degree of diversity will make the profession more “effective and creative” and bring “varied perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, talents and interests to the practice of law and the administration of justice.”

In explaining the need for such a document, the Initiative says, “A diverse group of talented legal professionals is critically important to the success of every law firm, corporate or government legal department, law school and public service organization and every other organization that includes attorneys.”

The 2006 Diversity Initiative follows on the heels of the Board’s adoption of the 2005 Call to Action that addressed issues faced by women in the profession. Real achievement in this area will require sustained action on the part of the signatories, said Michael B. Hyman, CBA President.

“This initiative has been one of the top priorities of my term,” Hyman said. “Greater diversity in the workplace enriches our profession, and mirrors our community. We, as a bar, must do more than to recognize diversity’s virtue and inherent value, and we must do more than to recognize that there is a problem. It is time for action, and my hope is that in the next three years there will be real advancement and more opportunities for lawyers of color.”

Signatories, whether law firms, non-profit or government agencies, law schools, or corporate legal departments in general agree to hire, promote and retain minority lawyers. The Initiative defines minority as Black/African-American, Asian/Asian-American, Hispanic, and Native-American.

Goals include:

Annually increasing the percentage of minority summer associates hired to reflect, at a minimum, the percentage of minority law students in law school for that year.

Annually increasing the number and percentage of minority associates employed, as measured from December 31, 2005 levels.

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Attempting to increase the number and percentage of minority partners.

Increasing the percentage of minority partners at a firm by two percentage points from December 2005 levels by December 31, 2008.

Increasing the number and percentage of minority partners serving on firm committees.

Increasing the number and percentage of minorities in leadership positions.

Supporting professional development of a firm's minority attorneys.

Publicizing legal department job openings in a variety of ways, including through minority bar associations, websites, and legal periodicals.

Considering a firm's commitment to diversity when hiring outside counsel including its success in meeting the goals set forth in the CBA Diversity Initiative for Law Firms.

Creating a diversity committee with the focus of increasing diversity and inclusion within the firm or law department. This committee should be diverse, i.e., include minority and majority group members, and should regularly report directly to the senior management of the firm, law department or agency.

Participating in diversity education programs, which should be mandatory at all, levels of the firm or organization.

Participating in CBA surveys and other efforts to measure the success of our efforts pursuant to this Diversity Initiative.

The CBA will honor the founding signatories of the Diversity Initiative at its annual *Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges* conference, Friday, May 12, 2006.

This conference focuses on issues of diversity and inclusion in addition to providing specialized skills training; strategies; resources and practical guidance for success. It is a unique opportunity for women and minority

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attorneys to establish networks with leading lawyers. The conference also highlights the achievements of women and minority lawyers, many of whom serve as inspirations and role models in the Chicago legal community. Call 312-554-2050 for information or visit www.chicagobar.org

About the Chicago Bar Association

Founded in 1874, the Chicago Bar Association is the leading metropolitan bar association in the country. The CBA is governed by a 23-member Board of Managers and has 55 Practice Committees, 23 Service Committees and 15 Special Committees, which provide a wide variety of services to the legal profession, the state and federal courts and the public. For more information visit the CBA website at www.chicagobar.org.