

For immediate release

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Law Firms Report Gains in Minority Hiring

To focus attention on the issue of minority hiring, the Hispanic Bar Association of Austin and the Austin Black Lawyers Association today issued their third annual report card grading the progress of Austin's largest law firms in hiring minority lawyers.

According to figures compiled by the HBAA and the ABLA, of 1,191 attorneys employed by the 26 largest law firms in Austin, 126—or 10.6 percent—are minorities.

“Nearly half of all Texans are Hispanic, African American, Asian, or Native American, and 44 percent of the Texas workforce is comprised of minorities. In this election year, minorities will be on the ballot in almost every city, county, and region of the state. Yet, when it comes to minorities in the legal profession in Texas, the numbers fail to keep pace with the overall percentage of minorities in the general population,” said Veronica Rivera, HBAA President.

According to the State Bar of Texas, only 12.5 percent of the 69,200 attorneys in Texas are Hispanic, African American, Asian, or Native American. In Travis County, only 11 percent of the licensed attorneys are minorities.

Using the statewide average as a guide, the HBAA/ABLA report card awarded an “A” grade to any Austin law firm with more than 12.5 percent minority lawyers. The following law firms received the highest scores:

A+

- Andrews & Kurth LLP
- Winstead Sechrest & Minick PC

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A

- Bickerstaff, Heath, Smiley, Pollan, Kever & McDaniel LLP
- Bracewell & Patterson
- Brown McCarroll LLP
- Hilgers & Watkins PC
- Jenkins & Gilchrist
- Strasburger & Price LLP

A-

- Gray, Cary, Ware & Freidenrich
- Lloyd, Gosselink, Blevins, Rochelle, Baldwin & Townsend PC
- Locke, Liddell & Sapp LLP
- Thompson & Knight LLP
- Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati

“When we graded firms last year, only eight ‘A’ grades were awarded, compared to thirteen this year. Also, the percentage of minority attorneys in Austin’s largest law firms has risen from 9.8 percent last year to 10.6 percent this year. This upward trend is encouraging, and hopefully it will continue,” said Nikelle Meade, spokesperson for the ABLA.

Last year, four Austin law firms received failing grades for their number of minority lawyers. This year, only two law firms—Graves, Dougherty, Hearon & Moody, with 3.7 percent minority lawyers and Scott, Douglass & McConnico, with 4.5 percent minority lawyers—received failing grades. Two law firms earned a “B” grade, five law firms received “C” grades, and four law firms received a “D” grade.

In a departure from last year, this year’s report card also grades law firms’ efforts in hiring minority lawyers. Grades of “E” for Excellent, “S” for Satisfactory, and “U” for Unsatisfactory were awarded for law firm activities such as participating in minority job fairs, providing mentors for minority law school students, establishing a committee within the law firm to promote diversity, and including minorities in the firm’s Recruitment Committee. Nine

Austin law firms received a grade of “Excellent” for their minority hiring efforts, ten firms received an “S,” and two law firms’ efforts were deemed to be “Unsatisfactory.”

The Hispanic Bar Association of Austin and the Austin Black Lawyers Association reiterated their commitment to help local law firms increase their hiring and retention of minority lawyers, and the HBAA and ABLA pledged to continue issuing their annual report card.

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