

## **Austin Minority Bar Associations Issue Diversity Report Card – March 23, 2012**

A report card issued by the Austin Asian American Bar Association, the Austin Black Lawyers Association, and the Hispanic Bar Association of Austin shows that some Austin law firms continue to make improvements in the hiring and retention of minority attorneys, while others lag behind. The annual Austin Law Firm Diversity Report Card evaluates and provides a grade for the 20 largest law firms in Austin based on the percentage of minority attorneys in each firm.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, minorities comprise 14 percent of all attorneys licensed to practice law in Travis County. Therefore, in order to receive an “A” grade, a law firm’s Austin office must meet or exceed the 14 percent threshold. Those falling below 8 percent receive a failing grade. In addition, consistent with prior report cards, the 2011 Austin Law Firm Diversity Report Card is again weighted in favor of law firms that have minority partners. “It is an issue important to the legal community,” noted Austin Asian American Bar Association President Julie Chen. “Law firms should be recognized based on their minority partners and minority attorneys. A minority partner's presence at a law firm is reflective of that firm's commitment to retaining, promoting and entrusting minority attorneys as firm leaders and role models.”

Jesse Butler, President of the Hispanic Bar Association of Austin, observed: “the Austin legal community has made some important strides in the hiring and retention of minority attorneys in recent years. However, Austin has a long way to go if its major firms are going to reflect the true diversity of our profession. Fortunately, all of our major firms recognize the benefits of a diverse workforce—and just as importantly, a diverse partnership—and those firms will continue to make efforts to find, hire, train, retain, and promote talented minority attorneys in the future.”

Aurora Martinez Jones, President of the Austin Black Lawyers Association, believes that although many of the law firms in Austin have shown improvement, there is still room for further growth in the area of diversity. “If we provide a mechanism for our firms to be accountable to the community and prove they are dedicated to diversity, then we will expect to see continual improvement over time. We hope to have done this with the Austin Law Firm Diversity Report Card so I am hopeful that those firms who still have much needed improvement will show it in the years to come.”

According to this year's report card, seven law firms earned an "A" grade for their exceptional minority recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts:

Baker Botts L.L.P.  
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati  
Andrews Kurth LLP  
Jackson Walker LLP  
Brown McCarroll LLP  
Thompson, Coe, Cousins & Irons, LLP

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<sup>1</sup> The top twenty Austin law firms were identified using rankings published by the Austin Business Journal in its October 7-13, 2011 publication.

Bickerstaff Heath Delgado Acosta LLP

One law firm earned a "B" grade:

Winstead PC

Five law firms earned a "C" grade:

Vinson & Elkins LLP

Scott, Douglass, & McConnico, L.L.P.

Fulbright & Jaworski LLP

Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell L.L.P.

DLA Piper LLP

Seven law firms received failing grades, including two who did not respond.

For a full list of firms with grades, see the attached 2011 Austin Law Firm Diversity Report Card.

The hiring and retention of minority lawyers is a key objective of the Austin Asian American Bar Association, the Austin Black Lawyers Association, and Hispanic Bar Association of Austin. All three groups have pledged to continue issuing the annual report card and to work with law firms on increasing the number of minority attorneys in their ranks.

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