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LAW FIRMS WORK TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY 8th Annual Minority Hiring Report Card Sees Some Gains

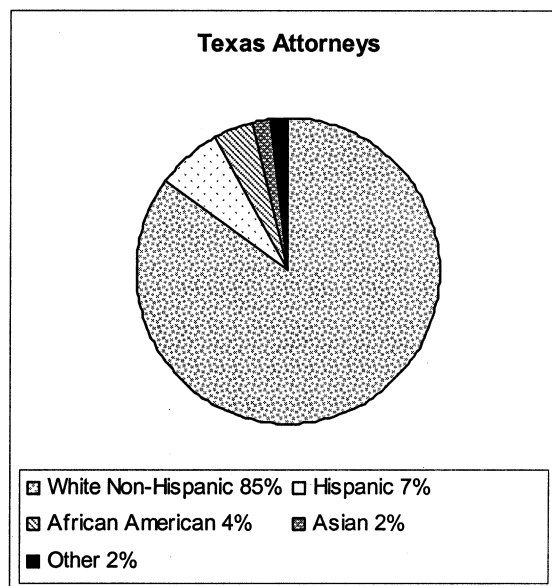
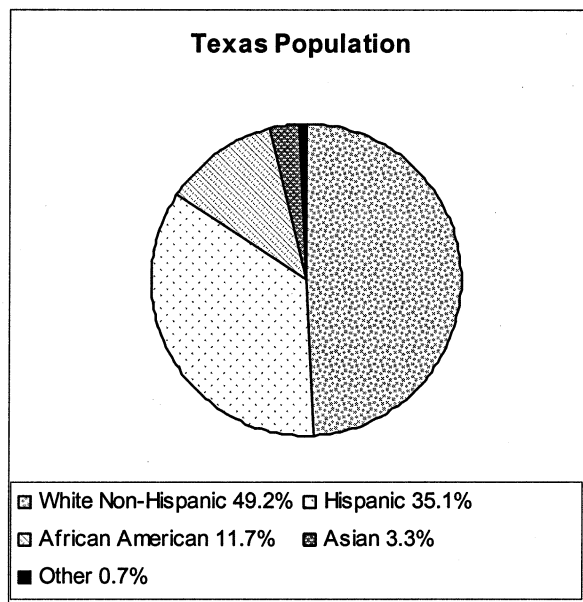
Some Austin law firms understand the value of diversity, as exhibited by the hiring of minority attorneys and law clerks, finds a report card issued by the Hispanic Bar Association of Austin, the Austin Black Lawyers Association, and the Austin Asian American Bar Association today, November 29. Now in its eighth year, the Minority Hiring Report Card grades the 25 largest law firms in Austin on the percentages of minority attorneys in the firms. This year, the report card shows that minority attorneys comprise 11.4 percent of the attorneys in Austin's 25 largest law firms, an increase over last year's 10.7 percent and the second highest percentage of minority attorneys since the report card effort began in 2000.

"What we ask of the law firms is very simple," says Paul Ruiz, Chair of the Joint HBAA/ABLA/AAABA Committee on Law Firm Hiring. "Even though the percentage of minorities in Texas is well over 50 percent, we are asking Austin law firms to meet the threshold of the percentage of minority attorneys who are licensed to practice law in Texas, which, according to the Texas State Bar, is 15 percent. Any Austin law firm meeting or exceeding that percentage receives an A grade on the report card," Mr. Ruiz explained.

In a change from previous years, this year's Minority Hiring Report Card is weighted in favor of law firms that have minority partners and hire minority law clerks. "It is an issue that the Joint Committee debated for quite some time," noted AAABA President Al Li. "In the end, we decided to reward law firms based on their minority partners and minority summer law clerks. 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. Increasing minority law clerk

representation in hiring programs not only creates work opportunities for minority law students but also helps to increase overall diversity at these firms in years to come.”

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 51.8 percent of the population of Texas is made up of minorities. Yet, only 15 percent of the lawyers in Texas are minorities.



According to numbers reported by the law firms, there are 1145 attorneys at the 25 largest law firms in Austin. Of those, 131 — or 11.44 percent — are minorities. Additionally, of those 1145 attorneys, 604 are partners in law firms, and 54 of those partners — or 8.94 percent — are minorities. Twenty-two of the 25 law firms hired 124 summer law clerks, and 36 of them — or 29 percent — were minorities.

Brian Jammer, President of the ABLA, believes that large law firms in Austin and other major Texas cities should embrace diversity because it is the wave of the future. “With the growing minority population of this state, law firm clients are seeking to sell their products and services to an increasingly diverse population, so it makes business sense for law firms to employ minority attorneys to respond to their clients’ needs.”

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

- Brown McCarroll LLP
- Bickerstaff Heath Delgado Acosta LLP
- Davis & Wilkerson, PC
- Clark, Thomas & Winters
- Andrews Kurth LLP
- Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
- Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

Six law firms earned "B" grades:

- Strasburger & Price, LLP
- Jackson Walker LLP
- Winstead PC
- Fish & Richardson PC
- Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP
- Thompson & Knight LLP

Six law firms earned a "C" grade:

- Fulbright & Jaworski LLP
- Scott, Douglass & McConnico, LLP
- Vinson & Elkins LLP
- DLA Piper
- Graves Dougherty Hearon & Moody
- Baker Botts LLP

One law firm earned a "D" grade:

- McKool Smith

Five law firms earned an "F" grade:

- Haynes and Boone LLP
- Thompson, Coe, Cousins & Irons, LLP
- McGinnis, Lochridge & Kilgore, LLP
- Bracewell & Giuliani LLP
- Armbrust & Brown, LLP

A survey of the data provided by the law firms shows that the following activities are common among firms scoring well on the report card:

- the law firm mandates and monitors that minority attorneys have equal access to clients, quality work assignments, committee appointments, marketing efforts and firm events;
- the law firm has a diversity council that includes senior partners and reports to the firm's managing body;
- the law firm communicates to all firm employees diversity information that includes achievements, diversity policies, and diversity statistics;
- the law firm has a diverse recruiting staff;
- at least one minority attorney in the firm's Austin office serves on the firm's managing body;
- the law firm has built strong relationships with external minority-focused organizations;
- the law firm includes diversity metrics and goals in marketing materials provided to clients;
- the law firm pays expenses related to participation in minority-focused associations; and
- the law firm pays membership fees for minority bar associations.

As in years past, the report card is accompanied by a Progress Report showing minority hiring grades earned by Austin law firms over the past eight years. The report card, the Progress Report and the news release are being sent to businesses—including clients of the law firms graded—throughout the Austin area, as well as local and statewide media, state and local elected officials, State Bar leaders, and members of the local judiciary.

Unlike years past, the Minority Hiring Report Card is being issued later in the year in order to coordinate diversity grading efforts by minority bar associations in Dallas and Houston, which both issued report cards for the first time last year.

This year marks the first time the AAABA has participated in preparing and issuing the Minority Hiring Report Card. The hiring and retention of minority lawyers is a key objective of the HBAA, the ABLA and the AAABA. 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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