



## **DIVERSITY PLEDGE OF THE SAN MATEO COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION FOR LAW FIRMS AND LAW RELATED ORGANIZATIONS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY**

Although San Mateo County Bar members are ethnically diverse, they recognize that African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Pacific Americans, and other racial minority groups continue to be underrepresented, particularly, in leadership roles in the legal profession *and in society at large*. In this document, racial minorities, as well as women, disabled persons and other historically underrepresented groups (LGBTQIA+) shall be considered “Underrepresented Attorneys”

- We recognize that diversity includes race, color, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age, and disability.
- The San Mateo County Bar Association (“SMCBA”) and the Signatories hereto are committed to fostering diversity and inclusiveness in the legal profession
- We agree to develop solutions to increase diversity in our legal and business communities, because it serves everyone’s best interests to do so.
- We know that diversity in the legal profession is critically important to the success of every law firm, corporate law department, law school, public service organization, and other businesses and organizations that include attorneys. With greater diversity, we can be more creative, effective, just, and bring more varied perspectives, experience, backgrounds, talents, and interests to the practice of law and the administration of justice. We further recognize that diversity in the legal profession is good for the profession, good for business, and good for our communities--it enhances the public’s confidence in the judicial system.
- We know that diversity contributes crucially to the success of every law firm, corporate law department, law school, public service organization, and other businesses and organizations that include attorneys. Varied diverse perspectives, experience, backgrounds, and talents will make us more creative, effective, and just in our law practices and courts. Diversity in the legal profession is good for the profession, good for business, and good for our communities—public confidence grows because a diverse Bar serves everyone’s best interests.

- We acknowledge that the American Bar Association and the California State Bar both share the goal to promote the full and equal participation of racial minority groups, women, and all other persons of diverse backgrounds in the legal profession *and elsewhere in society*.
- We acknowledge the need to facilitate diversity in the hiring, education, retention, and promotion of attorneys and in the elevation of attorneys to leadership positions within our respective organizations.
- Through hiring, training, retention and promotion, we are willing to increase the number of Underrepresented Attorneys practicing in law firms and corporate law departments and increase their opportunities to advance to leadership positions, such as law firm partners and senior corporate counsel.
- We recognize that diversity is not about quotas or different standards, but diversity should serve as an important qualitative factor in hiring and promotions. We also acknowledge that the goals set forth in the Diversity Pledge are not intended as support of quotas that reduce opportunities for any group. **We further recognize that specific examples of practices in the Pledge are to be viewed as guidance and may not be feasible or appropriate for all organizations.**
- We recognize that achieving and maintaining diversity is an evolving and challenging process that requires continued commitment and openness to positive change. Periodically, we agree to reaffirm our commitment to the principles, goals, and practices contained in this Diversity Pledge, and always to be ready to measure our progress through attendance in SMCBA programs.
- Accordingly, each Signatory pledges to support the diversity goals listed below and use his/her/their/its best efforts to implement all or a substantial portion of the diversity practices listed below, as follows:

**DIVERSITY GOALS  
LAW FIRMS, DEPARTMENTS AND COURTS  
IN SAN MATEO COUNTY**

**Diversity Goals**

In furtherance of the Diversity Pledge, the Law Firms, Department and Court Signatories support all or a substantial portion of the following goals:

**Diversity Committee.** We each agree to create a Diversity Committee, Task Force or assign a Person responsible for this initiative in our law firm or organization. A senior Partner or executive should be responsible for leading the committee and promoting its efforts. The Diversity Committee should itself be diverse.

**Diversity Committee recommended practices include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- The development of a mission statement and formal goals;
- Analysis of the organization's historical diversity practices, deficits, and achievements;
- Identification of current needs; and Development and implementation of practices designed to promote diversity and establishment of a system of measurements to gauge the organization's success. Some successful diversity committees engage outside consultants to assist in these efforts.

- One of the goals of the Diversity Committee should be to make the current work environment equally hospitable to all attorneys. A welcoming work climate facilitates hiring, increases retention, and leads to the promotion of professionals who add to our diversity.
- The Diversity Committee should ensure that all Underrepresented Attorney groups: (1) have available meaningful mentoring; (2) receive equal opportunities to perform significant work for important clients; (3) receive equal training, guidance and feedback; and (4) are fully included in work-related social activities with other attorneys and clients.
- The Diversity Committee also should help monitor firm activities or events to ensure that such activities are not exclusionary in nature.

## **Hiring**

To hire entry-level attorneys that substantially reflect the demographics of our county and state. We will strive to achieve this level of diversity as soon as we can, with the goal of doing so within five years from the date of this Diversity Pledge.

We also will take diversity goals into consideration in our administrative and lateral hiring, and are mindful of the need in general for our hiring to reflect the diversity of the San Mateo County community.

## **Training**

To provide adequate training to ensure employee success and acceptance. Adequate training is necessary to assure that employees have the tools necessary to perform their job duties and to thrive in their work environments.

**Diversity Training.** We agree to participate in appropriate diversity awareness training programs. Such training is most successful when it is mandatory at all levels.

## **Retention (Maintaining levels of diversity - alternative heading)**

To strive to maintain the same levels of diversity through retention of Underrepresented Attorneys whenever possible and continued hiring of Underrepresented Attorneys when attrition is unavoidable. The goal is to hire, train, retain and promote Underrepresented Attorneys and administrative staff. We will strive in good faith to achieve this retention rate as soon as we can, with a goal of doing so within five years from the date of this Diversity Pledge.

**Retention Practices.** In an effort to increase retention rates for Underrepresented Attorneys, the signatories agree to pursue all or a substantial portion of the following practices:

Instituting programs aimed at increasing retention rates for all attorneys (whether or not members of underrepresented attorney groups), focusing on allocation of desirable work, training and guidance, relationships with Partners and Senior Counsel, mentoring programs, work-life balance issues, client contact, feedback, and pro bono commitment.

Providing opportunities for Underrepresented Attorneys, equivalent to the opportunities provided to non-Underrepresented Attorneys, to be assigned work on a consistent basis of the type necessary to develop skills and acquire experience necessary for success and advancement.

Creating a work environment and policies regarding promotion and advancement that are as hospitable for Underrepresented Attorneys as for non-Underrepresented Attorneys, including, but not limited to:

- Including Underrepresented Attorneys as contributing members of the team;

- Assuring that Underrepresented Attorneys receive significant work assignments for important clients;
- Including Underrepresented Attorneys in work-related social activities with other attorneys and with clients; ‘
- Adopting policies evidencing an institutional commitment to pro bono legal work and to our community; and
- Adopting a policy prohibiting law firm or law department sponsored functions at, or support of, or supported by, institutions or organizations that discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, age and disability.

## **Promotion**

To be able, within five to seven years, not only to hire diverse first-year attorneys, but also to reflect that diversity to the point when attorneys are promoted to senior positions. When a department has successfully accomplished representative diversity in its mid-level ranks, its promotions will reflect that diverse workforce.

**Promotion Practices.** In an effort to increase rates of promotion to partnership and management for Underrepresented Attorneys, the signatories agree to pursue all or a substantial portion of the following practices:

- Identifying and recommending underrepresented attorney candidates for promotion in the same manner that non-underrepresented attorney candidates are identified and recommended for promotion;
- Guiding the development of Underrepresented Attorneys, i.e., grooming them for promotion, in the same manner as non-Underrepresented Attorneys are groomed for promotion;
- Making efforts to ensure that Underrepresented Attorneys are mentored by influential senior attorneys within the law firm or law department;
- Assigning responsibility for important client matters to senior Underrepresented Attorneys as they near consideration for partnership or senior counsel in the same manner as such matters are assigned to senior non-Underrepresented Attorneys.

## **Leadership**

To achieve diversity in leadership positions throughout San Mateo County Law Departments/Firms, recognizing that promoting diversity in leadership positions reflects our fullest commitment to diversity in the legal profession.

**Diversity in Outside Counsel.** We expect the law firms that represent our companies to work actively to promote diversity within their organizations. In selecting outside counsel, we will consider a law firm’s commitment to and progress toward achieving diversity goals, including its success in meeting the goals set forth in the Diversity Pledge. We will further seek to ensure that law firms that represent us provide opportunities to Underrepresented Attorneys to work on and have responsibility for matters in which the law firm represents us.

**Diversity Enhancing Programs.** To enhance the potential for success of our diversity efforts, the signatories agree to support or pursue all or a substantial portion of the following practices:

- Adopt programs to promote the success of our underrepresented attorney hires;
- Adopt programs for expanding diversity recruitment, including internships/summer associate positions for diverse law students; participation in job fairs for diverse law

- students; involvement of members of all underrepresented attorney groups in hiring; and diversity training for our recruiting personnel;
- Adopt viable work/life programs such as maternity/paternity leave, and child care, as well as benefit plans that offer registered domestic partners the same benefits offered to married couples; and
  - Organize networks of underrepresented attorney groups that support the attorneys and provide outlets and channels of communication with senior management.

**Measuring and Rewarding Success.** The signatories and the SMCBA recognize that it is important for all of the signatories to share information about their successes, as well as their failures, and to be supported in the programs they implement.

Thus, we agree that we will **participate in a yearly survey** from the SMCBA's Diversity Committee designed to measure our progress as to this Diversity Pledge. The aggregate statistics for all signatories collected from the survey will be distributed to each signatory and the SMCBA may report those statistics annually to its membership.

The SMCBA may annually recognize and award publicly a law firm, corporate law department, or the Courts that have made an outstanding contribution to promoting and achieving diversity.

*By signing this document, I affirm, on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_, a commitment to promoting diversity in hiring, retention, promotion and leadership as outlined by the SMCBA's Diversity Pledge.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Firm/Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Representative of Firm

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Authorized Representative

Please return signed copy to:

Deborah Kemper  
Executive Director  
San Mateo County Bar Association  
333 Bradford Street, Suite 150  
Redwood City, CA 94063

[deborahk@smcba.org](mailto:deborahk@smcba.org)  
650.368.3892 (Fax)