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Representation of Women and African-Americans Among Law Firm Associates Increases Slightly but Remains Below Pre-recession Levels

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Yesterday, the National Association for Law Placement (NALP) released its [2017 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms](#) based on the recent analyses of the 2017-2018 NALP *Directory of Legal Employers* (NDLE) — the annual compendium of legal employer data published by NALP. The report shows that women and Black/African-Americans made small gains in representation at major U.S. law firms in 2017 compared with 2016. However, representation of both these groups remains below 2009 levels. To see the full report, download it [here](#).

Significant Findings:

- Representation of women, minorities, and minority women among associates saw small gains in 2017, but representation of women and African Americans is still below pre-recession levels.
- In 2017, representation of women, minorities, and minority women among partners in law firms across the nation all increased a small amount over 2016.
- Representation of women among lawyers as a whole was up, has more than recouped losses in 2010, 2011, and 2015, and has exceeded the 2009 level since 2014.
- The representation of women and minorities in the summer associate ranks compares much more favorably to the population of recent law school graduates, though representation of minorities as a whole was unchanged from 2016.
- Lawyers with disabilities (of any race or gender) are scarce, both at the associate and partner levels.
- The percentage of LGBT lawyers has generally been trending upward over the period since 2002 when NALP first began compiling these figures, and small increases from 2016 to 2017 occurred across all lawyer types.

NALP Executive Director James Leipold commented on the new findings noting, “The latest NALP diversity and inclusion findings mirror recent findings by other national organizations, including the Minority Corporate Counsel Association and the National Association of Women Lawyers in showing that women and minority partners remain fairly dramatically under-represented at US law firms. The good news is that since the set-backs

measured in the associate ranks in the aftermath of the Great Recession, the data show that incremental net positive changes continue to be measured year-over-year for most groups. Women and minorities are better represented among the partnership and associate ranks than they were in 2016, though only incrementally so. Nevertheless, at the associate level, women and African-Americans remain less well-represented than they were before the recession, a finding that is both discouraging and significant.”

Leipold continued, “The other important piece of these findings is that the national aggregate numbers tell only part of the story. There are significant differences by law firm size and geography, and there are many jurisdictions where the disparities in representation are stark. Consider, for instance, that in Miami 33% of partners are minority while in Boston the figure stands at just 5%, or that in New York City 27% of associates are minority while in the racially diverse city of Charlotte minorities make up just 14% of associates, and that in Northern Virginia there were no minority men in the 2017 summer associate class.” To see the full report, download it [here](#).

The 2017-2018 *NALP Directory of Legal Employers* (NDLE), which provides the individual firm listings on which these aggregate analyses are based, includes attorney race/ethnicity and gender information for over 112,000 partners, associates, and other lawyers in 1,082 offices, and for over 7,000 summer associates in 804 offices nationwide. The NDLE is available online at www.nalpdirectory.com.

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About NALP

NALP is an association of over 2,500 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That’s why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and standards for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For more than 40 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of our members and the lawyers and law students they serve.

NALP maintains an online archive of press releases at www.nalp.org/pressreleases. For additional information about NALP research, contact Judith Collins (jcollins@nalp.org), Director of Research, or James G. Leipold (jleipold@nalp.org), Executive Director, at 202-835-1001. **Mailing address:** National Association for Law Placement, 1220 19th Street NW, Suite 401, Washington, DC 20036-2405.