

LGBT Bar Association Unveils 1st-Ever Directory

By **Shannon Henson**

Law360, New York (September 08, 2010) -- The National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Bar Association has launched a first-ever directory of LGBT law partners and LGBT-owned law firms.

The searchable directory, announced Wednesday, makes it easier for corporations to find and hire diverse counsel. More than 300 LGBT attorneys who have made partner at their law firms, as well as those who have established their own legal practices, are included in the directory.

"In the wake of the recession, the legal profession is more competitive than ever," said D'Arcy Kemnitz, executive director of the National LGBT Bar Association. "At a time when LGBT attorneys continue to be underrepresented at the partner level, the National LGBT Bar Association hopes the directory will provide opportunities for LGBT-owned law firms and LGBT-identified law firm partners to form long-lasting partnerships with diversity-minded clients."

To create the directory, the association sent out an e-mail blast to 8,500 lawyers, Kemnitz said. The association validated the information of those who responded and included them in the directory, which was made possible by the support of Foley & Lardner LLP, she said.

"It says something about where we are now with LGBT issues that people are willing to list themselves as out and proud," Kemnitz said.

Morrison & Foerster LLP tops the BigLaw firms, with 11 partners in the directory. Firms with four or more partners in the directory include: Fish & Richardson PC, Foley Hoag LLP, Frost Brown Todd LLC, Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, Jenner & Block LLP, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Littler Mendelson PC, Mayer Brown LLP, Paul Hastings Janofsky & Walker LLP and Seyfarth Shaw LLP.

"The inclusion of LGBT attorneys at the partner level can provide a competitive edge that law firms can ill afford to squander," Kemnitz said.

A number of large law firms have scored high marks on their LGBT-friendly workplace benefits and policies. A Human Rights Campaign Foundation survey released in September 2009 gave 43 percent of the 200 largest firms in the U.S. perfect scores for their LGBT-friendly practices.

The HRCF's Corporate Equality Index found that 87 of American Lawyer magazine's list of the 200 largest law firms deserved 100 percent ratings and designated them as a "Best Place to Work for LGBT Equality." In addition, 28 other law firms had ratings of 80 percent or above.

The survey rated 590 major businesses on a scale of zero to 100 based on their employment policies, benefits, organizational LGBT competency, responsible citizenship and public commitment to outside LGBT-specific efforts. The legal industry was one of the top LGBT-friendly industries in the survey.

According to the HRCF, the average rating for businesses in the survey was 86 percent, up from 83 percent the prior year.