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Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law Firms Launches in Chicago

First Group of Its Kind in the United States; 31 Firm Initiatives on Board to Date

CHICAGO – July 17, 2008 – A group of 31 women's initiatives in Chicago law firms has announced the formation of The Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law Firms, the first organization of its kind in the United States. Representing law firms of all sizes in Chicago and women attorneys at all levels, the Coalition provides a forum for representatives of the firms' women's initiatives to collaborate with each other. While law firms across the country have created internal women-focused groups and programs, this Coalition breaks new ground by bringing together a large-scale group of different firm initiatives in one market.

The group elected 18 board members at its July 9, 2008 meeting (see separate list). The individuals comprising the Board of Directors, who are designated to two- or three-year terms, have been charged with forging the future direction of the Coalition and helping to guide its strategic development and growth. The officers of the Board will be elected at the Coalition's upcoming meeting on August 5.

The organization's mission is to provide positive avenues of communication, collaboration and guidance that help each law firm women's group 1) enhance the recruitment, retention and promotion of women lawyers, and 2) support the building, implementation and continued relevancy of women's initiatives in law firms. The Coalition will play a significant role as women's initiatives in Chicago law firms continue to learn how to best serve their attorneys and enable them to make maximum progress in and contributions to their firms.

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“This is a unique joining together of firms of all sizes, and women of various backgrounds and practices, for the common purpose of supporting and furthering women’s initiatives and women in law firms,” said Nicole Nehama Auerbach, a founder of the Coalition and member of Valorem Law Group, LLC. “All firms can benefit greatly from this collaboration, and we are excited to begin delivering the benefits through a wide variety of planned programming.”

The idea of the Coalition originated with the recognition that the issues women face in law firms and in running their women’s initiatives are largely the same from firm-to-firm. In March of 2007, an initial meeting was hosted by women partners at Katten Muchin Rosenman (“Katten”), including Auerbach (who was then at Katten), to gauge the interest of local attorneys and law firms. Expectations were exceeded as approximately 70 women filled a large conference room, turning it into a standing-room only meeting. Due to the overwhelming interest, the group formed a smaller steering committee to help define the organization’s mission and determine next steps. Since then, the organization has successfully signed up 31 different law firms as members, with more than 65 women attorneys representing those member firms and acting as delegates to the Coalition.

Examples of programming already planned include an event at which Michele Richardson, Dean of Students at The University of Chicago Law School, will lead a discussion entitled “The Next Generation of Women Lawyers: What Do They Want and How Can Women’s Initiatives Respond?” Also planned is a “Making It Rain” event at which members will share business development tips and discuss the question of whether women generate business differently than men.

Firms who are already members of the Coalition include:

Baker & McKenzie LLP
Brinks Hofer Gilson & Lione
Bryan Cave LLP
Chapman and Cutler LLP
DLA Piper US LLP
Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP
Goldberg Kohn Bell Black Rosenbloom & Moritz, Ltd.
Jenner & Block, LLP
Jones Day
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Latham & Watkins LLP
Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP
Marshall, Gerstein & Borun LLP
Mayer Brown LLP
McAndrews, Held & Malloy Ltd.
McDermott Will & Emery, LLP
McGuireWoods LLP
Meckler Bulger & Tilson LLP

Much Shelist
Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP
Quarles & Brady LLP
Schiff Hardin LLP
Seyfarth Shaw LLP
Sidley Austin LLP
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
Thompson Coburn LLP
Valorem Law Group LLC
Vedder Price
Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon, LLP
Winston & Strawn LLP

“This initiative comes on the heels of three years of measurement and exploration spawned by the Chicago Bar Association’s Alliance for Women’s ‘Call to Action,’” said Auerbach. “There is tremendous enthusiasm focused on women’s initiatives and women’s issues both in the business community and in our firms. We are thrilled with the overwhelming response and interest so far, and we invite all firms to join us so they can capitalize on the positive energy and work of the Coalition.”

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