



Austin Manifesto on Women in Law

Adopted by acclamation at the Women's Power Summit on Law and Leadership, sponsored by the Center for Women in Law at the University of Texas School of Law, on May 1, 2009.

I. Summit Resolution

To eliminate the barriers that have thwarted the advancement of women in the legal profession for the past several decades, and thereby enhance the legal profession and its ability to serve an increasingly diverse and globally connected society, the participants at the Women's Power Summit on Law and Leadership –women leaders who work in all sectors of the legal profession – articulate the following principles and commit to the following pledges:

II. Principles

- A. The depth and breadth of the talent pool of women lawyers establishes a clear need for the legal profession to recruit, retain, develop and advance an exceptionally rich source of talent.
- B. Women increasingly have been attaining roles of influence throughout society; legal employers must achieve gender diversity in their leadership ranks if they are to cultivate a set of leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of their clients and members of the profession.
- C. Diversity adds value to legal employers in countless ways – from strengthening the effectiveness of client representation to inserting diverse perspectives and critical viewpoints into dialogues and decision-making. A critical mass of women lawyers is a significant element in providing a work environment that is hospitable and nurturing to women lawyers.

- D. It is imperative that, with a sense of urgency, we eliminate the barriers to equality and equity that confront women, especially women of color.
- E. Legal employers should offer a wide range of work arrangements to best take advantage of some of its most talented and committed lawyers, both male and female.
- F. Legal employers should provide transparency in articulating expectations, rules, and policies.
- G. Legal employers should ensure that those in management positions are held accountable for enforcing applicable policies promoting diversity, inclusion, and gender-neutral performance evaluations.
- H. Legal employers should ensure gender parity in compensation and advancement opportunities.
- I. The prevailing law firm business model should be examined and changed because it impairs the advancement of women, increases attrition and is under increasing scrutiny by clients. The current economic downturn creates urgency and opportunities for such restructuring.
- J. Our ultimate goal is to achieve gender parity in positions of leadership, influence, and responsibility in the legal profession.

III. Pledges

- A. We pledge to achieve parity for the generations of women lawyers who follow us by advancing these Principles and by working actively to eliminate gender bias and other barriers that impede the advancement of women in the legal profession.
- B. We pledge to adopt and implement measurable goals and benchmarks to monitor progress and to ensure that we achieve the implementation of the Principles set forth in the Manifesto.
- C. We pledge to be a public voice for change in the legal profession by speaking and writing about these issues; by supporting, conducting and publicizing research that demonstrates the myriad harms to both women and the workplace resulting from barriers confronting women lawyers; by insisting that the institutions of which we are a part support the Principles in this Manifesto; and by advocating creative approaches to organizational change that will accomplish these goals.

- D. We pledge to continue to identify, recruit, and engage leaders---in law firms, corporations, the judiciary, academia, and other sectors---who hold positions of influence and power within the legal profession, and to encourage them to be active and constructive participants in the advancement of these Principles and in the advancement of women in the legal profession.
- E. We pledge to identify goals and timetables that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and trackable. We commit to achieve no less than 30% women equity partners, tenured law professors and general counsel by 2015; to achieve no less than 10% equity partners who are women of color by 2020; elect a woman of color as President of ABA and Chair of ACC by 2015; and urge the President to nominate and the Senate to confirm women to vacancies on the federal bench, including the U.S. Supreme Court.
- F. We pledge to take specific ideas, actions, and best practices from the Summit to our organizations, firms, corporations, courts, and universities, and encourage them to change or adapt their policies to reflect best practices.
- G. We pledge to encourage the collection of specific, relevant data that will illuminate the most accurate, detailed picture of women in the legal profession so that our actions are evidence-based, data-driven, and outcome-focused.
- H. We pledge to support and advance the careers of other women by taking concrete action, including, among other things, mentoring, providing access to formal and informal professional networks, and referring business and job opportunities to women.
- I. We pledge to support the hiring, retention, and advancement of women of color to positions of leadership.
- J. We pledge to work for the restructure of compensation systems to reward the full range of contributions by attorneys, including training, mentoring, enhancing diversity, and maintaining and expanding client relationships.
- K. We pledge to encourage law schools to include in their curricula courses that develop leadership and business skills and offer guidance on a wide range of career paths.
- L. We pledge to reconvene the Summit participants to measure achievement of the goals and pledges stated in this Manifesto.