

Latinos@Weil Mission Statement

L@W is comprised of over 45 Weil Gotshal attorneys who have self-identified as Latinos/Hispanics, and who come from various ethnic and national backgrounds, such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Nicaragua and Argentina, just to name a few. It is our membership that forms the core of L@W and shapes its mission – to actively recruit and retain attorneys from all Hispanic backgrounds, as well as provide our Firm with a better understanding of what we, as Hispanics, can uniquely contribute to the Firm's overall success.

First, L@W aims to set the standard among its peer groups at other top tier law firms by actively recruiting the best and the brightest among Hispanic law students from across the country. L@W is committed to accomplishing its goal by making its members active in all stages of the recruiting process. L@W aspires for its members to serve as friends and mentors to law students and to each other.

Second, recognizing the importance of not only recruiting but also of retaining and promoting our membership, L@W exists as a source of information and support for the Hispanic attorneys at the Firm. Through the members of L@W, the Firm can better support Hispanic attorneys and contribute to their development as professionals.

Lastly, L@W serves as a conduit for highlighting the achievements and contributions of Hispanic attorneys within and outside of the Firm.



Weil Gotshal attorneys enjoy a summer recruiting event hosted by the Dallas office Latinos@Weil.

Event Highlights

L@W will host its second nationwide attorney retreat in the Fall of 2007 in Miami. The retreat is L@W's most substantive initiative to date, and it is intended to create a network, both social and professional, among our members on a Firm-wide basis.

L@W regularly hosts dinners and other activities for its members, which provide networking opportunities and allow our membership to stay in touch. For example, this summer we hosted a welcome dinner for our New York summer associates at a Nuevo Latino restaurant, where we watched a live Flamenco performance before heading downtown to salsa the night away.

In the Dallas office, L@W sponsored the 2007 recruiting kickoff event at The Meadows Museum on the Southern Methodist University campus featuring the Balenciaga exhibit celebrating Spanish design, classical Spanish guitar and heritage inspired food. In July, the Dallas office celebrated with a Multicultural Luncheon featuring food, readings and songs from the Latino culture. Also, the L@W Affinity Group members met for quarterly mentoring lunches.

L@W members are also actively involved in community service activities, including mentoring programs for Latino/Hispanic law students.

Sponsorships

L@W supports the Hispanic National Bar Association, including hosting events for the Bar's membership. L@W also regularly contributes to Latino/Hispanic affinity groups at law schools.

Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA): Several of our members are co-chairs of mentoring committees and various young lawyer's committees of the HNBA. In conjunction with the HNBA, L@W has organized several events that were held here at our Firm's New York office. L@W secured Nelson Castillo (then President of the HNBA), Carmen M. Segarra (Citigroup International Personal Banking and NY Regional President of the HNBA), Stephen Dannhauser (Chair of the Firm) and various clients of the firm to speak to the firm about diversity initiatives. We also continue to work with the HNBA to assist in developing relationships between firms and in-house lawyers, and plan to host an event at the Firm involving Wal-Mart.



Artwork by Ted Michalowski

Weil Gotshal associate at trial during PRLDEF externship.

Pro Bono

Members of L@W are committed to providing pro bono legal services to the Latino/Hispanic community. L@W attorneys have worked on political asylum matters, representing clients from across Latin America, including Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic. Asylum work is one of many ways in which the L@W membership seeks to contribute the resources of the Firm to those in need.

Recent Case of Note: Weil Gotshal is currently representing an 18-year-old girl from a rural area in Jutiapa, Guatemala. Her father is a subsistence farmer and her mother suffers from hypertension and diabetes. Neither of them is able to protect her from the gang violence in the area. One of the client's half-brothers lives in the United States and sends money home to the family. Our client was responsible for going into the nearest town to pick up the money from the bank. At 16, our client was attacked and threatened with rape and death twice by members of the gang Mara 18, identifiable by their tattoos. During these attacks she was held at gun point and sexually assaulted by gang members. She has been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. To escape further persecution at the hands of Mara 18, she fled Guatemala in July 2005, leaving behind her then 1 year-old son, now in the care of her parents. Our client was picked up while crossing the border in July 2005 and she is currently in removal proceedings. A team of L@W members from the Firm is helping her with her application for asylum.

Puerto Rican Legal Defense & Educational Fund (PRLDEF) externship: The firm developed a pilot pro bono externship program with PRLDEF that promotes and defends the rights of Latino communities. PRLDEF has primarily been involved in the areas of language rights, bilingual education, housing and employment discrimination, voting rights and ballot reform, as well as immigrant rights.

■ Weil Gotshal externs have worked on two particularly significant matters with PRLDEF. In the first, Weil Gotshal joined forces with PRLDEF and another law firm to represent six day laborers challenging a New York suburban village's acts of discrimination and harassment. The laborers alleged that the village was using its police force to target Latino laborers in a campaign of discrimination and harassment in a systematic effort to eject them from public spaces, preventing the Latino laborers from exercising their First Amendment right to express their desire to work. The district court for the Southern District of New York found that the village's "publicly-stated specific reason for taking action against the day laborers – that they were overrunning the Village and engaging in anti-social behavior – does not stand up to scrutiny." The district court ruled for the plaintiffs, noting, "the fact that the day laborers were Latinos, and not whites, was, at least in part, a motivating factor in the defendants' actions."

■ On the second matter, Weil Gotshal and PRLDEF represented a group of Latino residents, landlords and organizations in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, in an action seeking to enjoin the city from enforcing anti-immigration ordinances that would subject landlords who rent to – and businesses that hire – undocumented immigrants to severe fines. The case was tried in the Middle District of Pennsylvania in March 2007 and the court enjoined the ordinances in July 2007, stating that all immigrants, even those who entered this country unlawfully, have rights guaranteed to them by the United States Constitution. The court declared the ordinances unconstitutional, in part, on federal preemption and due process grounds. This decision will have an impact on immigrant rights throughout the country, as many cities have passed similar ordinances.

Firm Leadership

The Firm currently has eight Latino partners and 39 Latino associates.

Firm partners and associates are involved in many important committees, including hiring, summer program, pro bono, and diversity.

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