

WEGALA The LGBT Affinity Group of Weil

Mission Statement

WEGALA, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Affinity Group of Weil was established with the primary purpose of enhancing the recruitment and retention of LGBT attorneys and fostering a better understanding among all of the Firm's attorneys and staff of the unique issues facing the LGBT community. Members of **WEGALA** have organized and developed an agenda designed to enhance the personal and professional development of each **WEGALA** member and to support the overall interests of the Firm. **WEGALA** offers a forum for its members to network among other LGBT attorneys among and within the Firm's offices, encourages its members to participate in recruiting activities geared towards LGBT law students, promotes client and philanthropic outreach programs and provides a platform to raise concerns common to **WEGALA** members to the management of the Firm. Members of **WEGALA** actively serve as leaders in both the LGBT and legal communities.

Our People

- Of the LGBT attorneys at the Firm, 5 are partners, 2 are counsel, and 27 are associates in the U.S., London, and Hong Kong offices.
- Management Committee sponsors demonstrate the strength of our leadership commitment. These appointed senior leaders serve as a sponsor to an affinity group for which they are not already a member. They are charged with understanding key issues the group members face and advocating for necessary change. Karen Ballack is the Management Committee Sponsor for WEGALA.

Key Accomplishments

- Weil was named among the "Best Places to Work" for LGBT individuals by the Human Rights Campaign's 2014 Corporate Equality Index.
- In 2013, Weil was ranked fifteenth in "Best Law Firms for Diversity" and sixteenth in "LGBT Diversity" by Vault. The Firm was also ranked fourteenth on the 2013 AmLaw Diversity Scorecard.
- Partner Daniel Dokos is the Global Head of Finance and serves as a member of the Management Committee. He was named a "Leading" Lawyer for Banking & Finance in US by Chambers Global 2014.
- Partner Marco Compagnoni was named "Leading" Lawyer for Private Equity: Buyouts in UK-wide in *Chambers UK 2012* and a "Leading Lawyer" for Private Equity-Transactions in the UK by *IFLR 1000: The Guide to the World's Leading Financial Law Firms 2014*.

Programs / Policies

As of 2013, Weil provides equal health coverage for transgender individuals. In 2011, Weil also became one of only a handful of employers that offer a tax "gross-up" payment for employees whose same sex spouse or domestic partner is currently enrolled in the Firm's health benefit programs.

Event Highlights

- Weil is unique among law firms bringing affinity group members Firmwide for professional development conferences. In October 2013, Weil's LGBT Affinity Group held its second Firmwide conference in Washington, D.C., featuring alumni panels, pro bono presentations, strategic planning sessions, and networking receptions.
- To kick-off 2014 Pride Month, WEGALA hosted its fourth annual LGBT client networking event on the terrace of the penthouse of The Standard East Village in New York City. Over 100 people were in attendance including clients, professional contacts and members of WEGALA from across the United States.
- In June 2014, WEGALA hosted its annual welcome dinner for summer associates at Stone Rose Lounge.
- In 2013, WEGALA hosted its annual holiday dinner in New York for attorneys, staff, and former summer associates at Medi Wine Bar.



WEGALA members from Weil offices around the globe gathered in Washington DC in October 2013 for their biennial affinity group conference.

- During Diversity Week 2013, the London office hosted a “Global Working: Supporting Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Staff Overseas” presentation by Stonewall, an organization that campaigns and lobbies across the United Kingdom for LGB equality.
- The New York office hosted a film screening of “Brother Outsider,” a documentary on the African American and gay civil rights activist, Bayard Rustin. The filmmaker and Rustin’s surviving partner participated in a special post-film discussion that was shown via videoconference to the Boston, Dallas, Houston, and Miami offices.
- For LGBT Pride Month 2012, the Houston office hosted a panel lunch featuring transgender rights attorney, Phyllis Randolph Frye, who discussed various legal considerations for the LGBT community, and representatives from PFLAG and HATCH describing the legal and socioeconomic challenges faced by homeless LGBT youth.

Sponsorships & Community Service

- Weil is a substantial contributor and sponsor of many LGBT-related nonprofit organizations. Recent events in New York have included the ACLU LGBT & AIDS Project’s Summer Attorney Reception, the Ali Forney Center Oasis Benefit, the GLAAD Art Auction, the Trevor Project’s Spring Fling and TrevorLive, and the LAMBDA Legal Liberty Awards; and in Washington, DC, the LAMBDA Legal reception, the Whitman Walker Benefit, among others. In addition, Weil is an inaugural member of Out in Law, the first annual LGBT leadership organization for the legal industry, by the legal industry. Weil also recently joined the Hong Kong Gay & Lesbian Attorney Network (HKGALA.)
- Annually, Weil participates in the AIDS Walk of New York and Miami. Weil is consistently the top fund raising law firm for the AIDS Walk. To date, the Firm has raised over \$150,000.
- In 2011, Weil launched a Diversity Fellowship Program to first-year law students offering \$10,000 in scholarship awards to recipients. The program was expanded in 2012 to include second-year law students.
- In the summer, WEGALA hosts its annual law student reception at the National Lesbian and Gay Law Association’s Lavender Law Conference and Career Fair.
- In summer 2012, the Firm hosted its Diversity Recruiting Boot Camp for rising second year law students summer interning in New York. The workshop included a panel of Weil attorneys describing “a typical day in the life” of a junior associate, as well as smaller breakout sessions where lawyers and members of the Firm administration could share the written and “unwritten” rules of on campus interviews and large firm practice areas. The Boot Camp helps to build the legal talent pipeline by introducing law students to global law firm practice.

Pro Bono

- Weil is assisting the Human Dignity Trust (HDT) with a long term project to challenge laws in jurisdictions around the world which continue to criminalize homosexuality. More than 80 countries world-wide treat consensual same sex conduct as a criminal offence. This includes 42 of the 54 Commonwealth Countries, many of which retain these laws on their statute books as a holdover from Victorian-era legislation implemented in colonial times. Weil lawyers have been involved scouring news sites, poring over national constitutions and international human rights treaties, researching obscure statutes and ancient case law and forming contacts and networks to render the national reports as comprehensive and accurate as possible. The aim is



Partner and Management Committee Member Dan Dokos addresses guests at the annual Pride Month client networking event.

to provide HDT with a strong research groundwork for launching legal challenges to the constitutionality of these laws. Weil lawyers also hope to assist local counsel and organizations with litigation in their national courts and so directly contribute to efforts to sweep away these discriminatory laws.

- Weil has been supporting the work of the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund, which is committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, community organizing, and public policy efforts. For many transgender people, a legal name change is a first step toward conforming their legal identities to the way they identify and live their lives. But securing a legal name change, which involves interaction with the court system and judges, can be an intimidating experience that is foreign to many people. By pairing transgender community members with pro bono lawyers in private practice, the Name Change Project ensures that transgender people can successfully negotiate the legal process and move forward with their lives. Weil attorneys from all practice areas interview clients, then help them fill out the name change petition that is filed with the civil court and accompany the client to court for the name change hearing.

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