

Whatever Happened to Women in the Law?

From the President's Column in the July 2007
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GAWL has a long and proud history of standing up for women lawyers. The first president of GAWL pushed through the legislation that let women practice law, and the 26th president pushed through the legislation that let women serve on juries in Georgia.

I am the 80th President of GAWL, and I wish I could say all the problems for women lawyers have been solved. Unfortunately, according to a number of studies, the problems are nowhere near over for women lawyers.

Women are not making partner. Although more than a third of lawyers are women, 85% of all partners in law firms are men.

Overall Statistics About Women Lawyers		
	Men	Women
Percent of all U.S. lawyers	71.10%	28.90%
Percent who are partners in law firms	84.37%	15.63%
Percent in managerial and professional specialties other than law	51.50%	49.50%

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (1999).

Women outside law are doing better than women lawyers are. Outside the legal profession, a full 50% of managers and professionals are women. These numbers hold

even though many more women work part time in these other professions.

Percent presently working part-time		
Lawyers	3.20%	
Other professionals	15%	

Id.

According to a University of Colorado study, women lawyers are less likely to be promoted to partner, both and at their first firms and at firms they join later on:

University of Denver Study of Lawyers in Practice 9 Years		
	Men	Women
Promoted to Partner in first firm they entered	25%	18%
Moved to another firm and became partner	42%	24%
Stayed at first firm they entered without being promoted	0%	18%
Left law or became inactive in the profession	0%	18%

Jan Thomas, *Gender Matters*, U. of Denver Mag. (Spring 2005), at www.du.edu/dumagazine/feature_GenderMatters.html.

Women lawyers are not being paid as much. The University of Colorado study showed that even in the year 2000, women attorneys still made 60% of what their male peers did. Thomas, *supra*.

Women lawyers are not happy. A full 49% of women lawyers are not satisfied with their present employers. L. Bodine, *Law firms are losing women lawyers: Lack of mentors and networks cause workplace dissatisfaction* (May 2001), at www.martindale.com/xp/Martindale/Professional_Resources/LegalBiz_Online/

Legal_Administration/01_05_3.xml. Women leave their firms on average three years before men do.

The problems may exist, but GAWL has solved much bigger problems before. This year GAWL is tackling these problems head on. We're hosting a Leadership Academy that will give 25 women lawyers twenty hours of intensive training to equip them to step forward as leaders. We are using technology to expand our communications: women lawyers in rural areas can call in for seminars, and associates in Atlanta who have to work through lunch can pick up our programs by podcast. We will offer some programs by streaming and archived video from our website, so any of our members can attend, whenever they have time. We also have commissioned a study by the Princeton Research Group, to look at the issues confronting women as they try to balance life and work, and try to make partner.

We invite you to join one of our committees, and help change the practice of law for women across Georgia.

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