

A Call to Sanity

**From the President's Column in the January 2008
newsletter of the Georgia Association for Women Lawyers**

By Lee Wallace, President

**The Wallace Law Firm, L.L.C.
2170 Defoor Hills Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30318
404-814-0465
www.thewallacelawfirm.com
lee@thewallacelawfirm.com
© 2008 Lee Wallace**

It sounds so reasonable. A mother with kids wants to work less so she can spend more time with her kids, so she convinces her firm to let her work part-time. The firm allows her to work part-time, in exchange for less pay.

It sounds reasonable, but my anecdotal experience is that it is anything but. My friends who have taken the part-time route have wound up working essentially the same hours as the men in their firms, but for less pay, less respect, and less future.

GAWL is about to release its study on women lawyers working part-time, and one of the most telling –and frightening – facts we found was that women lawyers who work part-time are working, on average, 39.5 hours a week. My experience is that these same women average 60% or less of the salary that “full-time” lawyers make. (GAWL’s study did not explore the issue of salaries, but hopefully our next study will.)

GAWL’s study shows that the legal profession is fundamentally and radically askew, having veered so far from the reasonable that we no longer even recognize it.

Only in law could 39.5 hours a week be “part-time.” Only in law could people say part-timers working 39.5 hours a week are not really serious about their careers.

A 2002 ABA study found that in 1965, lawyers billed between 1200 and 1600 hours a year. Today, full-time lawyers are expected to bill 2000 to 2400 hours a year, and part-time lawyers are expected to bill 1200 hours. In a 2007 study, the ABA found that most lawyers would not recommend the legal profession to a young person. These two facts – the toll of being a lawyer, and the dissatisfaction with it – cannot be unrelated.

Increasingly we see a young generation of lawyers shuddering at the dizzying salary increases, because they know the lifeblood that will be exacted from them with each successive pay raise. As a profession we need to reevaluate what we demand of ourselves. Perhaps women wanting part-time work, and the younger generation facing the human toll of the increasing hours, will help us regain a sane and balanced view of who we are as lawyers – and as people.

Lee Wallace
The Wallace Law Firm, L.L.C.
2170 Defoor Hills Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30318
404-814-0465
www.thewallacelawfirm.com
lee@thewallacelawfirm.com

Lee Wallace practices personal injury, product liability and whistleblower/qui tam/False Claims Act law in Atlanta, Georgia, in her own firm.

Each case is different, and success in one case does not guarantee success in another. The contents of this article: (a) should not be considered or relied upon as legal, financial or other professional advice in any manner whatsoever, (b) may be considered advertising under some states' Bar Rules, and (c) do not establish an attorney/client relationship with lawyer Lee Wallace or The Wallace Law Firm, L.L.C. Unless otherwise stated, this article has not been updated or revised for accuracy as statutory or case law changes following the date of first publication, which precedes the date of the updated copyright. Always consult with your lawyer and/or your other professional advisors before acting. See full disclaimer at www.thewallacelawfirm.com.

© 2008, Lee Tarte Wallace