Mission Statement

AA@W promotes the recruitment and retention of Asian attorneys, including attorneys of East Asian, Pacific Island, Southeast Asian and South Asian origin or descent, and fosters a better understanding at the firm of Asian cultures and the unique issues confronting Asian attorneys. AA@W pursues an agenda designed to further the professional development and advancement of AA@W members and coordinates its activities with other affinity groups to support the overall interests of the firm. AA@W offers a forum for its members to network among and mentor other Asian attorneys across and within the firm's offices, encourages its members to participate in recruiting activities geared toward Asian law students, promotes client outreach programs, pro bono and other philanthropic activities, and provides a platform to raise issues to the management of the firm. Members of AA@W serve as leaders at the firm and in the Asian and legal communities.

Firm Leadership

- Of the firm's Asian attorneys, there are six partners, 82 associates and two counsels in the US offices.
- Asian attorneys serve as leaders on several firm committees, including the Diversity Committee and Summer Associate Program Committee.
- Partner Akiko Mikumo leads the firm's Asian practice and is the managing partner of the firm's Hong Kong office.
- In 2011, Weil was ranked 5th in "Overall Diversity" and 4th in "Diversity for Minorities" by Vault. The firm was also among the top ten on the list of "Top 25 Law Firms for Asian-Americans" by Multicultural Law Magazine.
- Partners Karen Ballack and Charan Sandhu were named "Leading" Lawyers by Chambers USA 2011.
- Annually, AsianAttorneys@Weil New York holds celebrations for Diwali and Eid that is attended by members of the Diversity and Management Committees.
- AsianAttorneys@Weil New York hosted the Asian Women in Business's “Raising the Bar: Asian Women Leading in the Legal Profession” to celebrate 2011 Women’s History Month. Partner Charan Sandhu was a featured panelist who discussed her unique path to success.
- Members welcomed the summer associates and celebrated the 2011 Asian Pacific-American Heritage Month by hosting a cocktail networking event at Mâ Pêche.
- AsianAttorneys@Weil members across the US participated in a three-part workshop series on business development and networking, “Networking is More Than Hors d’oeuvres.”

Event Highlights

- In 2010, the New York office teamed up with Citi's Asian affinity group to stuff over 275 journal kits for Project Sunshine, a non-profit organization that provides free educational, recreational, and social programs to children and families living with medical challenges.
- In 2010, the Dallas office held a summer associate event in which they enjoyed a traditional Korean BBQ dinner and karaoke in Koreatown.
- In March 2011, AsianAttorneys@Weil New York hosted a cocktail party at Papillon celebrating the Lunar New Year and invited Weil's Asian alumni.

AsianAttorneys@Weil New York, including Partner Soo-Jin Shim, partnered with Citi's Asian Affinity Group to make journal kits for Project Sunshine.
Community Giving

Weil contributes to many Asian-affiliated bar associations, including the Asian American Bar Association of New York (AABANY), the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) and the North American South Asian Bar Association (NASABA). Weil also sponsors many events organized by Asian-related benevolent organizations, including the Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund’s Lunar New Year Event, Asian Women in Business events and board meetings, AABANY’s Annual Banquet and both NAPABA and NASABA’s annual conventions.

- In New York’s team charity challenge, Weil Pays It Forward, Chinatown Youth Initiatives and the Community Fund for Manhattan were selected as beneficiaries of winning teams. Teams held an ice cream social at the Museum of Chinese in America and a Charity Chowdown Challenge. Chinatown Youth Initiative programs focus on exploration, education and empowerment when working with adolescents in the Chinese community. Funds raised for the Community Fund will go toward the translation of an Immigrant Rights and Services manual into Korean and Russian.

- During Diversity Week, the New York office raised over $3,000 for the Community Fund for Manhattan through a Jeans Fridays fundraiser. Staff and attorneys were allowed to wear jeans on Fridays if they donated $5/Friday to the Community Fund. The firm was able to fund the translation of an Immigrant Rights and Services manual to Spanish and Chinese through the $3,000 donation.

Pro Bono

Weil attorneys in Beijing worked with the Migrant Women’s Club in China through the Beijing Office of Public Interest Law Institute to review and comment on proposed contracts between domestic workers and household employers and provide English material from sister organizations outside of China to help the organization with its comparative law research. However, since few people at the organization can read English, Weil attorneys also helped with translating the materials from English to Chinese. The Migrant Women’s Club is an organization that provides support services and training to women who come to work in Beijing from rural areas of China. It also conducts research on issues facing migrant female workers and advocates new regulations to improve the status of migrant workers.

For several years, Weil attorneys have been working on the Election Protection Program with the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund as part of the nation’s largest nonpartisan program working to break down barriers to the ballot box for traditionally disenfranchised voters. Our multi-office effort aids the overall program by meeting with election officials, staffing hotlines to address voting rights, and serving as mobile legal volunteers on Election Day. Where necessary, our lawyers also litigate for improvements to the election process. The program is available to all voters across the country, but finds its greatest relevance in communities where voter disenfranchisement is a continuing challenge, including African Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, senior citizens, young people, low-income voters, and individuals with disabilities.

Weil co-counseled with the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) to secure an appeals court affirmation of a trial court decision protecting the rights of tenured public school teachers in Lowell, Massachusetts. Citing the longstanding rule that courts may not disturb an arbitrator’s legal and factual findings, the court preserved the arbitrator’s ruling that discrimination against non-native speakers violated Massachusetts anti-discrimination law. The decision significantly advances the rights of non-native English speakers in the workplace and was featured widely in the press and legal trade publications.

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The Black Attorney Affinity Group

Mission Statement

The Black Attorney Affinity Group embodies the talents and strengths of black attorneys across the firm, focusing on educating, mentoring and networking, recruiting and retention, pro bono initiatives, business development and client outreach. The Black Attorney Affinity Group is a result of the firm’s recognition of the importance and contributions of blacks in every aspect of firm life and is dedicated to the advancement of black attorneys at the firm.

Firm Leadership

- Of the firm’s black attorneys, there are five black partners and 43 black associates in the firm’s US offices.
- Partner, Derrick Cephas, heads the firm’s Financial Institutions Regulatory practice group.
- Members participate in a number of firmwide committees, including the Summer Program, Pro Bono, Hiring and Diversity Committees.
- In 2011, Weil was ranked 5th in “Overall Diversity” and 4th in “Diversity for Minorities” by Vault.

Event Highlights

- The Dallas office annually celebrates “Juneteenth” which acknowledges the day that the last slaves were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. In 2011, the Dallas office made a fun and informative Weil “On the Street” video about Juneteenth with Weil employees answering questions specific to the holiday. In 2010, a luncheon was held that included art presentations and song performances. In 2009, a local high school dance troupe performed for the Dallas office and a lunch of southern food was served. In 2008, the Dallas office welcomed Monique Ridge-Williams who dramatized stories about Charles Waddell Chesnutt, recognized by many as the first African American writer to earn a national reputation.
- In honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday, the Boston office held a screening of the film “America Beyond the Color Line” with Henry L. Gates, Jr. The Dallas office held a screening of “Race: The Power of an illusion – The House We Live In” and discussed Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speeches and biography.
- The Black Attorney Affinity Group welcomed new partner, Derrick Cephas, and the new associates in the wine cellar of Bottega del Vino.
- In Dallas, there was a film screening of “Brother Outsider” in which many staff and attorneys all came out for. “Brother Outsider” is a documentary on the life of African-American and gay civil rights activist, Bayard Rustin.
- The Houston office hosted a film screening of “Tulia, Texas” that addressed a racially motivated drug bust in 1999. Following the screening, a mosaic of responses to the film was created.
- The “Folks” Party is a Weil tradition beginning in 1987 at Partner Marsha Simms’s Home. This event brings together members of Weil’s four racial/ethnic-based affinity groups, alumni and minority summer associates. Vernon Broderick, a Partner and member of the Black Affinity Group, continued this long-standing Weil tradition and hosted this year’s 24th Annual “Folks” Party at his home.
- 2011’s Black Affinity Group event for the summer associates was a cocktail tasting at Whitestar, a Black-owned bar in the Lower East Side. The popular event included a brief history of a few of the bar’s featured cocktails.

Associates Nadya Salcedo, Barbara Bridges, Kira Stanfield, Melissa Colon-Bosolet, Kristen Echemendia and Carlos Larkin, with high-school students of Summer Search at the organization’s Leadership Gala.
Pro Bono

In an immigration matter referred to us by KIND, we were able to secure permanent resident status (a green card) for a sixteen-year-old boy whose family home was destroyed by the devastating earthquake in Haiti. After the disaster, his mother, living on the street and unable to provide for her son, sent our client to live with a cousin in the United States. The mother gave up custody to the cousin, who was appointed legal guardian. We petitioned for and were granted a special immigrant juvenile visa and a status adjustment to permanent resident.

For more than four years, in one of the largest pro bono projects in the firm’s history, Weil has been working with Human Rights Watch in assessing the activities of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. A number of cases are currently pending at the ICC for individuals with issued arrest warrants alleging war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Kenya, Libya, Uganda, and Darfur, Sudan. From time to time, it consults members of the Weil team about the significance of certain decisions and trial proceedings with respect to the broader development of international law and practice in accordance with the appropriate standards. Human Rights Watch, therefore, plays an influential role in the development of the court, and the digests and analyses produced by our team help them effectively engage with important interlocutors. Since the project’s inception, Weil has worked over 5,000 hours assisting Human Rights Watch in this important endeavor.

Sponsorships and Community Service

- In December 2010, the Black Attorney Affinity Group collected over 240 books for the Achievement First Crown Heights Elementary School in Brooklyn. When the books were delivered to the school, Weil attorneys read to some of the students from donated books.
- Members in the New York office regularly host panel discussions, tours and activities for a Girl Scout troop from middle schools in the South Bronx as part of their Career Exploration Program (CEP) to broaden the career horizons of disadvantaged girls in New York City.
- The firm annually sponsors the Corporate Counsel Women of Color’s Career Strategies Conference to encourage awareness of diversity, provide networking opportunities for women attorneys of color and provide career development programming.
- The New York office hosted Summer Search high school students and early college students for a Career Discovery Day “Meet and Greet,” and Career Coach Kick-Off. The firm also sponsored the 2011 Summer Search Leadership Gala.
- In New York’s team charity challenge, Weil Pays It Forward, the Boys and Girls Harbor, a charter school in East Harlem, was selected as the beneficiary of one of the winning teams. The team held legal skills classes for high school students of the school.
- The Community Kitchen and Food Pantry of Harlem was also selected as a beneficiary of one of the winning teams in Weil Pays It Forward. The team hosted a food tour scavenger hunt and donated all proceeds to the food bank to help with food distribution, income support and nutrition education.
- Annually, the New York office hosts PALS (Practicing Attorneys for Law Students) for a workshop on “Networking and Personal Branding” for New York area minority law students.
- In 2010, the New York office organized a career panel with representatives from different areas of the firm for students from the Emily N. Carey School, the high school at the Boys and Girls Harbor in New York.

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**Latinos@Weil**

**Mission Statement**

Latinos@Weil is comprised of Weil 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 Latinos@Weil 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, Latinos@Weil 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. The group’s members are active in all stages of the recruiting process. Latinos@Weil aspires for its members to serve as friends and mentors to law students and to each other. Second, recognizing the importance of retaining and promoting our membership, Latinos@Weil exists as a source of information and support for the Hispanic attorneys at the firm. Through the members of Latinos@Weil the firm can better support Hispanic attorneys and contribute to their development as professionals. Lastly, Latinos@Weil serves as a professional network uniquely equipped to interface with other Hispanic professional networks and clients with needs in Spanish-speaking countries.

**Firm Leadership**

- Of the firm’s Latino attorneys, there are nine partners, 44 associates and one counsel in the US offices.
- In 2011, Weil was ranked 5th in “Overall Diversity” and 4th in “Diversity for Minorities” by Vault. The firm was also among the top ten on the list of “Top 25 Law Firms for Hispanic-Americans” by Multicultural Law Magazine.
- Partner Yvette Ostolaza is a member of the Management Committee and co-head of the firm’s Complex Commercial Litigation practice group. She was recently named one of the “Most Influential Hispanics” by Hispanic Business and a “Winning Woman” by Texas Lawyer Magazine.
- Partner Edward Soto is the head of our Miami Litigation practice. He was recently named a “Best Lawyer” by Best Lawyers in America 2011.
- Associate Chris Lopez was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Hispanic Bar Association of Houston.
- Partner Yolanda Garcia was named a recipient of the “40 under 40” award by the Dallas Business Journal.
- Partners Alfredo Perez, Yvette Ostolaza and Edward Soto were all named “Leading Lawyers” by Chambers USA 2011.

**Event Highlights**

- In 2010, Latinos@Weil, along with KPMG’s Hispanic affinity group, held a “Meet and Greet” for high schools students from Summer Search, a program that provides low-income high school students with mentoring, college advising, and a lasting support network. Students developed networking skills and learned about the professional world through a career panel and a speed-networking session.
- The firm hosted a panel and reception for New York racial/ethnic minority law students on the topic, “Conducting a Legal Job Search in a Down Economy.” The event was held on behalf of Practicing Attorneys for Law Students, a non-profit committed to enhancing the skills and careers of minority attorneys and law students.

Yolanda Garcia, a partner in the Dallas office, shares her career advice with Summer Search students at a joint event with KPMG.
In May 2011, Latinos@Weil New York hosted a breakfast networking Cafecito for Latina attorneys throughout the city. Diana Sen, President of the Hispanic National Bar Association, and Jenny Rivera, CUNY Law School Professor, discussed their work on the ABA’s Commission on Hispanic Rights and Responsibilities.

Latinos@Weil New York welcomed Weil’s 2011 Hispanic summer associates with an intimate dinner at Yerba Buena Perry St.

Sponsorships and Community Service

During Diversity Week, the New York office raised over $3,000 for the Community Fund for Manhattan to fund the translation of an Immigrant Rights and Services manual to Spanish and Chinese.

The firm annually sponsors LatinoJustice PRLDEF’s Annual Awards Gala.

The firm hosted a recruiting bootcamp for Latino-American Law Student Associations to demystify the large law firm interview process. Topics of discussion included understanding the recruiting timeline and how to prepare for on-campus interviews.

The firm participates in several internship opportunities including the Posse Foundation’s program in DC for undergraduate students interested in law, the Judicial Intern Opportunity Program in Dallas for minority law students interested in legal research and writing for judges, and the Sponsors for Educational Opportunity program for minority students interested in law.

Latinos@Weil members in the New York office have hosted panel discussions and activities for troops of girls from middle schools in the South Bronx as part of their Career Exploration Program (CEP). CEP is a new initiative designed by the Girl Scout Council of Greater New York to broaden the career horizons of disadvantaged girls in New York City.

In summer 2011, the New York office hosted Summer Search high school students and early college students for a Career Discovery Day that addressed interviewing, resumes, cover letters, professional etiquette and time management. The students also shadowed various professionals, including Weil attorneys, after the program.

Pro Bono

Members of Latinos@Weil are committed to providing pro bono legal services to the Latino/Hispanic community. Two examples include:

A team from our Silicon Valley office represented a young woman from the Mexican state of Michoacán in her successful application for asylum. The matter was referred to Weil by the San Francisco office of Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights, a Washington-based not-for-profit organization that involves the private bar in providing legal services to address the cause of civil rights. Our client and other female members of her family were victims of repeated sexual and physical abuse by the client’s father. In rural Michoacán such forms of abuse are common and often go unchecked by authorities. Our client’s case presented a challenge because it involved domestic violence and child abuse, both of which are developing areas of asylum law. Because our client is from Mexico, which added an extra level of approval was required. Following the required one-year waiting period after grant of asylum, the Weil team assisted our client in a successful application for permanent residency.

In an immigration matter referred to us by KIND, we represented a Guatemalan child who was in the process of being removed from the United States after coming here from a background of danger and neglect. At the age of fourteen he was forced to leave his home in Guatemala due to parental neglect and gang violence. Weil worked for more than a year to convince the District of Columbia juvenile court to declare that the child was abandoned and neglected and that it was not in his best interest to return to Guatemala. With this success under our belt we were able to obtain Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and permanent residence in the United States.

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Associates Nadya Salcedo and Kristen Echemendia join high school students of Summer Search for a Career Discovery Day hosted by Weil.
**Women@Weil**

**Mission Statement**

Women@Weil embraces the talents and energy of women across Weil, focusing on mentoring, networking, recruiting, retention, advancement, pro bono initiatives, business development and outreach. Women@Weil is committed to helping the firm’s women achieve their potential in their professional and personal lives, and addressing the challenges they may encounter along the way. Women@Weil is represented in each of the firm’s offices around the world, and is open to all women lawyers, from first-year associates to senior partners.

**Women’s Advancement**

**Women Leaders:** There are 62 women partners globally (20%). Twenty-two percent of the firm’s US partners are women. Eleven women are committee chairs, office heads or practice group leaders. Three of the 17 members of the Management Committee are women.

**New Women Partners:** 49% of the new US partners promoted in the last five years are women.

**Women Associates and Counsel:** 44% of the firm’s associates and counsel are women.

**Client Development**

- In 2011, Women@Weil associates in New York led intimate client development events at Artisanal Premium Cheese Center, Cooking by the Book and Chocolate Bar for fondue with clients and women attorneys.

- Women@Weil Dallas hosted a first-of-its-kind event called Guns N’ Nails where attendees received personal-defense training, hands-on handgun training and manicures in massage chairs. Dallas also hosted a client and recruiting luncheon featuring Nancy Lieberman, a basketball Hall of Famer and two-time Olympian, who spoke about mentoring and work-life balance.

- In May, Women@Weil Paris held a private visit of an art exhibition on Lucas Cranach followed by a cocktail dinner for female clients, professional contacts, and Weil attorneys.

- In May 2011, Women@Weil Houston hosted a client networking event called Couture & Cocktails. Houston women attorneys and clients enjoyed hors d’oeuvres, cocktails and a fashion show.

**Professional Development**

- Women@Weil London held an offsite for women attorneys to discuss priorities for the group in 2011.

- In fall 2010, Women@Weil New York held a workshop called, “Speaking Up at Work: How to Improve Your Voice and Communicate More Effectively” to make an impact when participating in a meeting or a day in court.

- In 2010 and 2011, Women@Weil European offices held cross-office training series including “Getting Feedback You Can Use,” “Building a Strategic Network,” and “Establishing Meaningful Mentoring Relationships.”

- In summer 2011, men and women attorneys (in the New York office) participated in a presentation by Sarah Wald on “Communication Across Gender: What Attorneys Need to Know.”

**Mentoring and Networking**

- Women@Weil New York and Boston offices participated in a Mentoring Week 2011 book discussion of Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office: 101 Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers by Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D.

- In 2010, Women@Weil New York held a speed networking event for over 70 women attorneys to encourage interaction across practices.

- Women@Weil Boston learned self-defense followed by dinner at a partner’s beach house.

- Women@Weil Houston sponsored a 2011 summer event at Pinot’s Palette, sipping wine while learning how to paint the Houston Skyline.

- Women@Weil Silicon Valley held a wine and food pairing with a sommelier.

- In 2011, the German offices held a Women@Weil Goes World Cup event and attended the Women’s Soccer World Cup Championship match between Germany and Nigeria with attorneys, including Partner Britta Grauke, and guests from prominent companies and clients.
Work/Life Balance

**Flex-Time:** The firm created the role of “Flex-Time Partner,” available for women and men who have made a long-term career choice to work on a flexible schedule. Since 2006, four flex-time partners have been elected.

**Working Parents:** Weil has instituted expanded parental leave, providing up to 18 weeks for eligible female associates who are expectant mothers, up to 10 weeks for fathers upon the birth of a child, and up to 10 weeks for adoption leave; and a Mother’s Room in the New York office for nursing mothers (attorneys, support staff, and visiting clients) who have returned to work.

- Women@Weil New York created a subcommittee, Mothers@Weil, to provide a forum to discuss and address issues affecting associate mothers.

Community Service

- Women@Weil Frankfurt, New York, London, and Warsaw hosted business attire clothing drives, collecting over 700 pieces.
- During Diversity Week 2011, the Silicon Valley office prepared care packages for Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse for survivors of domestic abuse, and the Miami office completed a community service project for Women in Distress.
- In summer 2011, Weil’s Miami office sponsored the Raise-the-Bar Event to benefit the Women’s Fund of Miami. The cocktail reception was attended by over 300 legal professionals and raised significant funds to support community organizations that provide legal assistance to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.
- Offices throughout the firm sponsored various women’s organizations and events including Asian Women in Business, Baby Buggy, Catalyst, Corporate Counsel Women of Color, Financial Women’s Association, The Fistula Foundation, Girls Inc., Girl Scouts, Gulf Coast Women in Leadership Symposium, inMotion, YWCA and many others.

Pro Bono

Weil attorneys in Beijing worked with the Migrant Women’s Club in China through the Beijing Office of Public Interest Law Institute to review and comment on proposed contracts between domestic workers and household employers and provide English material from sister organizations outside of China to help the organization with its comparative law research. However, since few people at the organization can read English, Weil attorneys also helped with translating the materials from English to Chinese. The Migrant Women’s Club is an organization that provides support services and training to women who come to work in Beijing from rural areas of China. It also conducts research on issues facing migrant female workers and advocates new regulations to improve the status of migrant workers.

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Weil’s Budapest office completed significant comparative legal research for Budi aktivna Budi emancipirana (B.a.B.e.), or Be active, Be emancipated, a Zagreb-based strategic lobbying and advocacy group focused on the affirmation and implementation of women’s rights. Our lawyers researched the protections for free speech in place in the Hungarian legal system, with a particular focus on safeguards to the independence of journalists and the media. B.a.B.e. may use this research and advice in the advancement of journalistic free speech in Croatia.
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.

Firm Leadership

- Of the openly gay attorneys at the firm, four are partners, one is counsel, 26 are associates and one is a law clerk.
- Partner Daniel Dokos is the Global Head of Finance and serves as a member of the Management Committee.
- Associate Jason Comer was elected to the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division of the Board of Governors.
- For the third consecutive year, Weil was named among the “Best Places to Work” for LGBT individuals by the Human Rights Campaign’s 2011 Corporate Equality Index.
- In 2011, Weil was named one of the “25 Best Law Firms for LGBT Diversity” and 5th in “Overall Diversity” by Vault.

Programs / Policies

In 2011, Weil announced a new benefit program for LGBT employees. Becoming one of only a handful of employers that offer it, the firm now provides 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

- In May 2011, WEGALA had a networking and pre-client event workshop to help develop a game plan, craft an elevator speech and plan follow-up with clients.
- To kick-off Pride Month and Memorial Day Weekend, WEGALA members hosted a Pre-Pride Month LGBT Networking Event on a gorgeous spring day on the terrace of the penthouse of The Cooper Square Hotel in New York City. Over 60 people were in attendance including clients, professional contacts and members of WEGALA from across the United States.
- In the summer of 2011 in New York, members of WEGALA hosted a wine tasting for our LGBT summer associates at Xai Xai, a South African wine bar.
- In April of 2008, WEGALA held their inaugural retreat at the firm’s Boston office. The retreat provided the opportunity for the affinity group to develop their mission statement and leadership structure, evaluate their recruitment and retention efforts, and discuss issues that concern LGBT attorneys at the firm and in the legal community at large. Highlights from the retreat included a...
welcome dinner in which Mayor Cicilline of Providence, Rhode Island spoke about the obstacles he overcame to become elected as the first openly gay mayor of a capital city, an expert panel on the legal and legislative strategy for securing same-sex marriage, a client panel, a recruiting reception with students from Boston-area law schools and an opportunity for group team-building during a community service project.

- During Diversity Week 2011, the Boston office held a discussion on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” with an ACLU staff attorney and a gay former Army soldier. The Budapest office held a Diversity Week discussion on “LGBT Rights in Hungary”.

- Both Dallas and London hosted presentations on bullying/cyber-bullying during Diversity Week 2011 to address recent events and help attorneys and staff understand the nature of such acts in schools, communities and at work.

- In 2011, Weil celebrated Pride Month by putting together a video featuring staff and attorneys for the It Gets Better project that was debuted at a presentation by The Trevor Project on bully/cyber-bullying.

- On June 27, 2011, members of WEGALA and the Diversity Committee joined other attorneys and staff at the firm for a champagne toast to celebrate the passing of the equality marriage law in New York.

### Sponsorships & Community Service

Weil is a substantial contributor and sponsor of many LGBT-related charities and benevolent organizations. WEGALA regularly attends and actively participates in numerous national and local fund raisers. Some recent events have included the ACLU LGBT & AIDS Project’s Summer Attorney Reception, the GLAAD Media Awards, the GLSEN Respect Awards, the LAMBDA Legal Liberty Awards, and the Human Rights Campaign’s New York Gala.

Annually, Weil participates in the AIDS Walk of New York and Miami. To date, the firm has raised over $117,000!

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**Pro Bono**

In April 2011, Immigration Judge Brigitte Laforest granted the asylum application of our client, who feared that due to being a gay man, he would be killed if forced to return to his country of origin, Bosnia. Through direct examination of our client and direct of our psychiatric expert, the client established the credible basis for that fear and the expert provided support for why our client did not file his application in a more “timely” fashion, given his deep depression spurred by his coming-out to his family (by phone from here in the US) and their repeated threats over the phone and by text messages that they would kill him if he ever returned. The Court found the testimony credible, excused any delay in the filing for asylum, and granted the application. We were referred to this client by the organization, Immigration Equality, an organization that advances equal immigrant rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and HIV-positive community.

Weil represented a 27-year old Kenyan man who sought asylum in the United States based on persecution he suffered in Kenya upon coming out publicly as a gay man. The Kenyan penal code criminalizes homosexual acts with a prison sentence of up to fourteen years, and known or suspected gays and lesbians in Kenya are routinely subjected to violence, threats, harassment, and blackmail. Our client, a committed activist for the rights of homosexual and transgender individuals in East Africa, was himself cut off from his family, brutalized by classmates, evicted from his apartment, threatened with death, and blackmailed by police after providing a rare interview on national television in which he admitted to being homosexual and talked about the plight of gay and transgender individuals. Our client was granted asylum on December 22, 2010.

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WEGALA spearheaded the firm’s participation in AIDS Walk New York 2011 with a team of over 50 Weil attorneys, staff, friends and family that out-fundraised every law firm that participated.