

**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS**

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For further information contact:  
Dr. Stacie I. Strong  
Executive Director  
(312) 988-6186, [strongs@nawl.org](mailto:strongs@nawl.org)

**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS  
ISSUES NAWL CHALLENGE**

On July 18, 2006, the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL)® issued the NAWL Challenge at its Annual Awards Luncheon in New York City. The luncheon, which was held at the Waldorf=Astoria, was attended by over 900 people in the public and private legal sectors.

The NAWL Challenge addresses gender disproportionality in the upper echelons of the legal profession and encourages those in leadership positions to take immediate action to cure those inequities. Recent research indicates that women comprise nearly 50% of incoming law school students but only 15% of equity partners at law firms and 15% of chief legal officers. Thus, NAWL challenges both law firms and corporations with in-house legal departments to cure this inequity so that, by the year 2015, 30% of all equity partners, 30% of all chief legal officers and 30% of all tenured law faculties are women.

"Increasing the number of women in the upper levels of the legal profession isn't just the right thing to do, it's good for business," said Lorraine Koc, President of NAWL and General Counsel/Vice-President of Deb Shops, Inc., when issuing the NAWL Challenge. "For example, one of the Big Four accountancy firms provides schedule flexibility, career watching on assignments and business developmental paths that support women professionals. As a result of these initiatives, the firm has saved \$10 million annually, with stronger representation of women at every level."

Koc has seen the attrition of women lawyers firsthand. "After several years in practice, I looked around and found that my women law school classmates – some of the brightest, most capable students and lawyers – had disappeared from the profession." This is unacceptable to Koc, leading her to propose a "trifecta" approach to address the issue on the individual, institutional and bar association level.

Following the conventional wisdom that "what gets measured gets done," NAWL has undertaken a comprehensive survey on the retention, promotion and compensation of women lawyers, focusing on the Am Law 200. Similar surveys will be conducted annually, thus giving an objective measure of law firms' successes in eliminating gender disparities.

Koc also said that NAWL will be sponsoring a Superconference for the Advancement of Women in the spring of 2007. That conference will focus on understanding the issues and sharing concrete solutions to the problems facing women lawyers in the profession today.

Koc believes that the NAWL Challenge is the first step to tangible change in law firms and in-house legal departments across the country. "Our goal is to truly own our profession at every level," she said, "and NAWL is prepared and qualified to help women lawyers across the nation do just that."

NAWL is the leading national voluntary organization devoted to the interests of women lawyers and women's rights. Founded over 100 years ago, NAWL has members in all 50 states and engages in a variety of programs and activities to advance its mission. More information can be found at [www.nawl.org](http://www.nawl.org).