

## **Press Release: Nebraska Law Firms and Corporations Sign Diversity Call to Action**

The Nebraska State Bar Association coordinated a Call to Action Initiative on Friday February 1, creating a network of firms and corporations that have agreed to work collaboratively and innovatively to promote diversity in the legal profession. A signing ceremony recognizing the 57 signatories was held at the Cornhusker Hotel.

Minority representation in the legal profession is significantly lower than in most other professions. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, total minority representation among lawyers is about 9.7 percent, compared to 20.8 percent among accountants and auditors, 24.6 percent among physicians and surgeons, and 18.2 percent among college and university teachers. While the diversity of Nebraska's legal profession has improved slightly over the past several years from 2.3% non-white attorneys in 2002 to 3.2% in 2008, it is still well below being representative of Nebraska's demographics. Nebraska State Bar Association President Wayne Mark states, "While I do not purport to fully understand the reasons for this disparity or why the legal profession is less diverse than other professions, it is apparent to me that this disparity will continue if we do not take some action to effect change. I know that the Nebraska State Bar Association is committed to initiating new programs and activities to foster diversity and that, with the support of Nebraska lawyers, we will be able to effect real change in the diversity of our profession."

Modeled after successful initiatives in other cities, the Call to Action Initiative encourages law firms and corporations to sign on to a basic statement of diversity principles and agree to participate in programs initiated by the Nebraska State Bar Association in pursuit of these principles. Co-Chair of the Nebraska Minority Justice Committee, Linda Crump provided an overview of existing bar programs and programs that they would like to develop in conjunction with the network. "The goal is to both expand the pipeline of diverse law school applicants and take steps to ensure we can retain the attorneys of color currently practicing in Nebraska. We know that every firm and corporation is unique. What we hope to do is provide the Call to Action network with several different options for how they can help promote a diverse profession, whether that be contributing to our LSAT Prep Scholarship program, helping to establish mock trial programs in diverse high schools, or utilizing the Nebraska Legal Diversity Website to attract a broader applicant pool for positions."

Firm and Corporate members of the Initiative include:

Anderson, Creager, and Wittstruck, PC  
Baird Holm LLP  
Bartle and Geier Law Firm  
Baylor Evnen Curtiss Gruit & Witt LLP  
Berens and Tate PC LLO  
Blackwell Sanders LLP  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska  
Bradford Coenen and Ashford LLC  
Cada, Froscheiser, Cada and Hoffman  
Cassem Tierney Adams Gotch and Douglas  
City of Lincoln  
Cline, Williams, Wright, Johnson and Olfather LLP  
ConAgra Foods Inc.  
Croker, Huck, Kasher, DeWitt, Anderson and Gonderinger, LLC  
DeMars Gordon Olson & Zalewski  
Douglas County Attorneys Office  
Engles, Ketcham, Olson & Keith PC  
Erickson Sederstrom  
Federal Public Defender's Office  
First Data Corporation  
Fraser Stryker PC LLO  
Gross and Welch PC LLO  
Harding and Schultz  
Incontro Law  
John W. Carlson P.C.  
Kalkwarf and Smith Law Offices  
Knapp Fangmeyer Aschwege Besse and Marsh  
Knudsen, Berkheimer, Richardson & Endacott, LLP  
Koley Jessen  
Kutak Rock LLP  
Lancaster County Public Defender  
Law Office of Joseph Sena  
Law Office of Judith Wells  
Law Office of Thomas Maul  
Legal Aid of Nebraska  
Lieben Whitted Houghton Slowiazcek and Cavanagh PC LLO  
Lincoln Electric System  
McGrath North Mullin and Kratz PC LLO  
McHenry Haszard Hansen Roth and Hupp  
Midlands Bar Association  
Mutual of Omaha Insurance Company  
Nebraska Advocacy Services  
Nebraska Appleseed  
Nebraska Hispanic Bar Association  
Nebraska State Bar Association  
Pahlke Smith Snyder Petitt & Eubanks  
Rembolt Ludtke LLP  
Ruth Mueller Robak  
Saunders County Public Defender Office  
Sennett Duncan Borders and Jenkins PC LLO

Simmons Olson Law Firm PC  
Spencer Fane Britt and Browne LLP  
Stinson Morrison Hecker LLP  
Truell Murray and Maser PC  
Union Pacific Corporation  
Waite McWha and Harvat  
Whitner Law Firm

**If you are interested in joining the Call to Action, Contact Liz Neeley at 402-475-7091.**