

News

State to 'Partner' With Minority Firm Group on Legal Counsel Issue; News

By Thomas Adcock

618 words

9 November 2007

New York Law Journal

p. 24, col. 2

Volume 238; Issue 92

English

Copyright 2007 ALM Properties, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

SOON AFTER a spirited news conference last month on the steps of City Hall, the National Association of Minority- and Women-Owned Law Firms was surprised by a friendly phone call from the object of its protest — the state of New York.

Michael Jones-Bey, director of the State Division on Minority and Women's Business Development, was on the line to say that the new administration in Albany was foursquare behind the group's demand for an equitable share of approximately \$10 million spent each year by state agencies and public authorities on outside legal counsel.

At the news conference, activists produced a study revealing that none of that \$10 million went to law firms owned by women or racial minorities in 2006.

"To have spent nothing on a single law firm [run by minorities or women] is emblematic of what seems to be taking place nationwide, and it is very difficult to find a legitimate reason for such a gross disparity," said Emery K. Harlan, a Milwaukee lawyer and chairman of the association.

In an interview Wednesday, Mr. Jones-Bey said he agreed with Mr. Harlan. He said he found the association's October study "alarming."

"By supporting minority- and women-owned businesses, we have the advantage of revitalizing our state in terms of economic development," Mr. Jones-Bey said. "It's never really been looked at that way. It's been looked at as some sort of social program."

Some 75 percent of all new jobs in the state comes from small business, said Mr. Jones-Bey. And registration records show that half of New York's small companies are owned by minorities and women.

Mr. Jones-Bey said further his agency is now "partnering" with the Milwaukee-based association, which counts among its members six New York City firms, one on Long Island and another in Buffalo.

In addition, he said he would likewise work with minority bar groups to lobby for legislation that would codify an executive order from Governor Eliot Spitzer that likewise satisfies the association's agenda for a fair share of legal work.

Assemblyman William Scarborough, D-Queens, requested that order. His office said he is now drafting a bill for introduction in the current legislative session.

Meanwhile, the association's third annual meeting was held Tuesday and Wednesday at the Millenium Broadway Hotel, drawing together members from 40 small law firms nationwide.

Among other subjects under discussion was the successful result of the association's New York press conference, in which the first of a series of studies on dispensation of public legal work was released. Future studies are to cover such practices in California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas, Massachusetts, Georgia, Florida and Washington, D.C.

"There's a rainbow about to come about," said Yolanda Coly, the association's managing director. "I'm going to spread the news around the rest of the country about our reception in New York."

NAMWOLF member firms in New York state include:

- Wood, Rafalsky & Wood (Manhattan), administrative law, business law, commercial litigation, health care
- Brune & Richard (Manhattan), commercial litigation, securities law, internal investigations
- Donovan & Yee (Manhattan), IP, trademark, copyright law
- d'Arcambal, Levine & Ousley (Manhattan), commercial litigation, employment benefits law, real estate law
- Hoguet Newman Regal & Kenney (Manhattan), banking law, commercial litigation, employment benefits and partnership law, computer law, environmental law
- Schoemann, Updike & Kaufman (Manhattan), arbitration, business and commercial law, elder law, family law
- Moran Karamouzis (Rockville Centre), bankruptcy, commercial litigation, labor and employment law, health care law
- Schröder, Joseph & Associates (Buffalo), employment benefits law, franchise law, labor and employment

Document NYLJ000020071109e3b90002w