

AGENDA ITEM

JULY 151

**Diversity Awards—Proposed
New Category and
Amendments to Guidelines**

DATE: June 11, 2007

**TO: The Members of the Board of Governors
The Members of the Committee on Volunteer Involvement**

**FROM: Hon. Brenda Harbin-Forte, Chair, Council on Access & Fairness and
Patricia Lee, Director, Office of Legal Services, Access & Fairness
Programs**

**RE: Diversity Awards—Proposed New Category and Amendments to
Guidelines**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2001, the Board of Governors adopted a resolution to improve diversity in the legal profession and in the governance of the State Bar. (APRIL 702) The resolution included various policies to achieve these goals, including the “recognition of outstanding efforts on diversity issues, similar to the President’s Pro Bono Service Awards” and requiring the development of standards and procedures for Board of Governors approval. In January 2002 the Board of Governors approved the creation of the State Bar Diversity Awards, along with the selection criteria and procedures for the awards.

Award categories currently include Individual Attorney and Bar Association. This item proposes the additional category of Legal Employer in response to the growing number of law firms, corporate counsel and government/public sector entities creating and expanding diversity programs deserving of this recognition.

Background

On January 26, 2002, the Board of Governors adopted a resolution to create the State Bar Diversity Awards. The resolution was adopted in response to the Board of Governors’ policies to improve diversity in the legal profession (April 702).

The current Diversity Awards recognize a bar association and an individual attorney for exemplary achievements in encouraging, increasing and/or retaining diversity in the legal profession and/or within their bar membership. Additional factors include 1) the development of programs or projects that address issues of access and elimination of bias in the legal profession, 2) the ability to influence individuals who have been historically under-represented in the legal profession to pursue legal careers, and/or 3) increased advancement opportunities for lawyers who have been historically under-represented in all practice areas and levels of the legal profession.

This item proposes the addition of a Legal Employer category in recognition of the growing activity by law firms, corporate counsel and government/public sector entities statewide in developing and expanding innovative diversity programs to increase and retain diverse attorneys in the practice of law.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Diversity Award Guidelines be amended to add a Legal Employer Category, with actual proposed amendments appearing in ***Attachment A***.

It is further recommended that the Diversity Award Nomination Form be amended to reflect the proposed Legal Employer Category, with actual proposed amendments appearing in ***Attachment B***.

Fiscal Impact: No additional fiscal impact. The current budget allocation from the Elimination of Bias Fund for the Diversity Awards activities will be sufficient to cover this additional category.

Personnel Impact: No additional personnel needed.

Board Book: No known impact.

Proposed Board Committee Resolution:

Should the board committee concur with the recommendation, the following resolution would be appropriate:

RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Council on Access & Fairness, the Board Committee on Volunteer Involvement recommends that the Board add a Legal Employer category to the Diversity Awards, and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board amend the Awards Guidelines and Nomination Form as set forth on the form attached to the minutes and made a part thereof.

Proposed Board Resolution:

Should the Board of Governors concur with the board committee's recommendation, the following resolution would be appropriate:

RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Board Committee on Volunteer Involvement, that the Board hereby adds a Legal Employer category to the Diversity Awards , and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board amends the Awards Guidelines and Nomination Form as set forth on the form attached to the minutes and made a part thereof.