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Banner Serves as IP Section Liaison To ABA's Commission on Women In The Profession

"We've Come A Long Way But Have A Long Way To Go"

Chicago, IL - August 4, 2001. Women in the legal profession and the justice system have come a long way in being viewed as equals, but they still have a long way to go.

That's the view of **Pamela Banner**, a shareholder in the intellectual property law firm of Banner & Witcoff, who serves as the Intellectual Property Section liaison to the American Bar Association's Commission on Women in the Profession.

The Commission's purpose is to secure the full and equal participation of women in the ABA, the legal profession and the justice system. Created in 1987, the Commission has 12 members appointed by the ABA president to assess the status of women in the legal profession and to identify barriers to advancement.

"There are many strong and talented women in the ABA and in the legal profession generally," says Banner. Increasingly, women serve as general counsels in corporations as well." But, she notes, it is still difficult for women to be hired in top jobs in some large law firms or companies.

The legal profession is not the only one that continues to have a glass ceiling, Banner notes. "But the numbers of women in top legal jobs speaks to the fact that barriers do still exist. All professions need to see women contributors as integral to success. That is why the Commission's work is so important."

The Commission seeks to bring about change in the legal workplace. As the Commission's literature states, "Drawing upon the expertise and diverse backgrounds of the Commission members, the Commission develops programs, policies and publications to advance and assist women in law schools, academia, public and private practice and the judiciary."

Banner, whose intellectual property law practice includes some of the world's largest corporations, is working toward the goal of not needing a Commission such as this one in the future. "I hope to see a time when women's contributions are not discounted, when there are gender neutral evaluations, and when there is no differentiation between men and women in the workplace. Rather, at some point I hope that people are judged only for the talent and knowledge they bring to the table."

Banner points to the Women Rainmaker's group in the ABA as a step in the right direction. She supports additional CLE training that is focused on business development in the context of being a female attorney. She believes that women who have jobs at executive levels need to realize they are role models and mentor other women. She further encourages women in-house counsel to award major pieces of work to competent women in law firms. "These are the kinds of actions that will change the work environment for women in the future," she says.

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Banner & Witcoff, Ltd. is dedicated to excellence in the specialized practice of intellectual property law, including patent, trademark, copyright, trade secret, computer, franchise and unfair competition law. The firm actively engages in the procurement, enforcement and litigation of intellectual property rights throughout the world, including all federal and state agencies, and the distribution of such rights through licensing and franchising. The firm has 80+ attorneys and agents in its Chicago, Washington, D.C., Boston and Portland, OR offices.