

# Focus on

# Diversity

For more information on items in this special section, contact Louisiana State Bar Association Director of Member Outreach and Diversity Kelly McNeil Legier, (504)619-0129, (800)421-5722, ext. 129, or e-mail [kelly.legier@lsba.org](mailto:kelly.legier@lsba.org).

## Registration open for LSBA Disability Summit on Oct. 20

The Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Diversity Committee and the Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities Committee are hosting a Disability Summit on Thursday, Oct. 20, at the U.S. District Court Building, 500 Poydras St., New Orleans. The summit, "The Dawn of An Enabled Era: Unraveling the Myths of Attorneys with Disabilities," will address challenges and solutions for attorneys and judges with disabilities.

The summit has been approved for 4 hours of CLE credit. The early registration fee is \$50 (until Oct. 7).

For more information on the program and speakers, to register online or to download a registration form, go to: [www.lsba.org/GoTo/disabilitysummit](http://www.lsba.org/GoTo/disabilitysummit).

## 23rd Annual Minority Job Fair set for Sept. 24

The 23rd annual Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Minority Involvement Section's Minority Job Fair is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 24, at Tulane University Law School's John Giffen Weinmann Hall, 6329 Freret St., New Orleans.

For more information on available participation opportunities, contact LSBA Member Outreach and Diversity Director Kelly McNeil Legier, [kelly.legier@lsba.org](mailto:kelly.legier@lsba.org), (504)619-0129; or Member Outreach and Diversity Executive Secretary Sonjanita C. Jordan, [sonjanita.jordan@lsba.org](mailto:sonjanita.jordan@lsba.org), (504)619-0115.

## Casting call: LSBA members wanted for video contest

The Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Diversity Committee is seeking members of the Bar to volunteer as actors and/or legal representatives for its video contest, "What Can Diversity Do For Me?"

The objective of the contest is to secure another vessel for this committee to communicate the value of diversification in the legal profession to the legal community and beyond. The videos will be created/produced by qualified college and/or graduate students statewide as a chance for the qualified student to win \$1,000 for creating/producing a video that will be used at legal events and programs all over the state.

The committee is looking for members of the legal profession who are willing to make themselves available to be interviewed and/or taped, by the qualified students, as necessary for their making of these videos. No acting experience is necessary.

If you are interested, email Adreja Boutte, [alboutte@christovich.com](mailto:alboutte@christovich.com); or Kelly McNeil Legier, [kelly.legier@lsba.org](mailto:kelly.legier@lsba.org). The deadline to sign up is Oct. 3.

## Diversity and Inclusion Workshop scheduled in Alexandria on Oct. 21

The Louisiana State Bar Association is partnering with the Alexandria Bar Association and the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc. to host a free, half-day diversity and inclusion workshop in connection with its court renaming on Oct. 21. Additional details will follow. For more information, contact Kelly McNeil Legier, (504)619-0129, email [kelly.legier@lsba.org](mailto:kelly.legier@lsba.org); or Zeb Winstead, (318)445-1488, email [zwinstead@crowellandowens.com](mailto:zwinstead@crowellandowens.com).

## Diversity Resources on the Web

- ▶ LSBA Diversity Resources Page  
[www.lsba.org/diversity/resources.asp](http://www.lsba.org/diversity/resources.asp)
- ▶ ABA Report: "Diversity in the Legal Profession: The Next Steps"  
[http://new.abanet.org/centers/diversity/PublicDocuments/Diversity\\_Summary\\_Report.pdf](http://new.abanet.org/centers/diversity/PublicDocuments/Diversity_Summary_Report.pdf)
- ▶ 2010 Beyond Diversity: Inclusiveness in the Legal Workplace Resources  
[www.legalinclusiveness.org/](http://www.legalinclusiveness.org/)
- ▶ ABA Disabilities News and Resources  
<http://new.abanet.org/disability/Pages/default.aspx>



## Proof that Diversity Drives Innovation

By Donald Fan, *Senior Director, Office of Diversity, Walmart*

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In a recent State of the Union address, President Barack Obama mentioned the word “innovation” nine times, more than any other president ever has, according to Fareed Zakaria. This highlights a key point that in this new era, rife with volatility and ambiguity, innovation is critical in sustaining organic growth and securing success in a globally competitive environment. We know that there exists a strong connection between innovation and diversity and inclusion; our challenge is to help our leaders and fellow professionals understand that connection. By exploring scientific research, corporate practice and personal observation, this article aims to connect those dots. While business lore tends to link innovation with a creative drive that is exclusive to the top and brightest talent,

true innovation thrives in an inclusive culture that values diverse ideas, leverages unique perspectives and invites everyone to achieve collaborative breakthroughs across the entire organization.

### A Diverse Workforce is a Valuable Source of Innovation

The vital foundation for innovation derives from a diverse workforce. Diversity of talent, by definition, provides more ideas and perspectives into driving for the best business solutions. Diversity becomes a valuable resource for innovation through a diverse workforce that reflects today’s marketplace through consumer insights and “wisdom of the crowd” that can lead to creative betterment.

People see problems and solutions from different perspectives. These perspectives

are accompanied by the heuristics that define how individuals search for solutions.

When confronted with a problem, we encode our perspectives and then apply our particular heuristics to explore new and better resolutions. Diverse teams often outperform teams composed of the very best individuals, because this diversity of perspective and problem-solving approach trumps individual ability.

Research confirms that diversity is a valuable resource for innovation. Prof. Ron Burt of the University of Chicago conducted an empirical study indicating that people with more diverse sources of information generate consistently better ideas.

To read the full article, go to DiversityInc.’s website: [www.DiversityInc.com/lsba](http://www.DiversityInc.com/lsba).

## in the SPOTLIGHT

### The Jones Law Group

The Jones Law Group in Monroe, La., has been in business for more than 40 years. During that time, the firm has maintained a strong commitment towards diversity and a history of protecting the interests of diverse persons who have been disenfranchised.

“We definitely feel that a diverse group of talented legal professionals is critically important to the success of the law firm and recognizes every person’s opinion as equal,” said managing partner Frederick D. Jones.

The Jones Law Group believes that, often in the legal profession, people navigate towards those who share their common interests — in an effort to

maintain a certain comfort level. The Jones Law Group believes its hiring practice is a way to bring in diverse attorneys and to promote confidence in the unbiased judicial system. The firm hires attorneys through several databases, including Goodwill Industries of North Louisiana, Will Staff Worldwide and Manpower, where race, color, ethnicity, religion and disability are not apparent on the face of the application.

In addition to promoting diversity through its hiring practice, the firm said it “[e]xecuted the LSBA Statement of Diversity Principles, because we agree to use our best efforts to increase the diversity in our hiring, retention and promotion of

attorneys and the elevation of attorneys to leadership positions within our firm.... We also agree to promote and participate in appropriate diversity awareness training programs as well as programs to measure our progress in the pursuit of the stated diversity principles.”

The Jones Law Group’s commitment to protecting the civil rights of diverse individuals is demonstrated through the substantial amount of pro bono work performed in the fields of employment discrimination and redistricting. Examples include *Guillory v. Avoyelles Parish School Board*, CV03-0285-A (W.D. LA 8/2/06), and *Lewis v. City of Ruston, et al.*, 07-0092 (W.D. LA 11/6/08).

The “In the Spotlight” section highlights diversity achievements and ground-breaking diversity accomplishments, primarily of signatories of the LSBA’s Statement of Diversity Principles. If you have recommendations for attorneys, judges or legal organizations that should be considered for future articles, call or email Kelly McNeil Legier, (504)619-0129, [kelly.legier@lsba.org](mailto:kelly.legier@lsba.org).