

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Baker Donelson Hosts State Bar of Georgia's Diversity Program for High School Students

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(Atlanta, GA / June 1, 2009) The Atlanta office of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC, hosted a lunch and mentoring session on May 26 for a group of 16 high school students who are participating in the State Bar of Georgia Diversity Program's High School Pipeline Project for Minority Students.

"This is the second year for this two-week program, which is one of the very few ways minority high school students gain exposure to, and advance their interest in, a future career in law. Reports show a significant decline in the number of law school applications from minority college students, and this program aims to help reverse that trend," said Charles T. Huddleston, a shareholder at the firm and chair of the State Bar of Georgia's Diversity Program. "The students are mostly freshman and sophomores, which affords them the chance to continue within this Pipeline Project and receive advanced programming levels over the next few years. About a third of this year's class are returning students."

Last summer, The State Bar of Georgia's Diversity Program partnered with the Leadership Institute for Women of Color Attorneys, Inc., and Atlanta's John Marshall Law School to launch the High School Pipeline Project for Minority Students. The program targets about 20 high school minority students with a strong interest in attending law school. The program's primary objectives are to improve the students' skills in grammar, writing, and speech, better prepare them for college and law school, and provide them with mentoring sessions with Atlanta attorneys and judges, who can inspire, educate, and motivate the students to select law as a career.

For two weeks, these high school students are taught grammar, speech and writing skills at the Law School. They also make daily visits to local judges' chambers, private law firm offices, and corporate legal departments. The students have the opportunity to meet lawyers and judges of color to learn how they overcame significant obstacles to enter law school and build a successful career. They will also engage in practical sessions on a variety of topics, including protecting and managing credit ratings. They conclude the program with written and oral competitions, judged by attorneys.

Diversity in the legal profession has been a focus for Baker Donelson, and the Firm has implemented formal diversity programs as well as women's initiatives to ensure the recruitment, retention and advancement of women and minority attorneys. Baker Donelson also created a diversity pipeline-to-law school initiative in an effort to increase the number of minorities and women who go to law school. The "Bringing Diversity to Our Businesses" program focuses on mentoring minority and female college students who have an interest in the legal profession. This initiative will be fully implemented this fall with two undergraduate universities.

Since the launch of Baker Donelson's Diversity Initiative in 2002, the percentage of minority attorneys at the Firm has far outpaced the Firm's overall growth. While the total number of attorneys at Baker Donelson has doubled, its minority attorney population and the number of minority shareholders have more than quadrupled. The Firm was recently named among the "Top 100 Law Firms for Diversity" and the "Top 100 Law Firms for Women" by *MultiCultural Law*, a magazine focused on diversity in the legal profession.