



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

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In EEOC Settlement, Four 'BigLaw' Firms Disavow DEI and Affirm Their Commitment to Merit-Based Employment Practices

WASHINGTON – Four of the world’s largest law firms—Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Latham & Watkins LLP, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP, and A&O Shearman Sterling, LLC—have entered into a settlement agreement with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency announced today.

On March 17, Acting Chair Andrea Lucas **sent letters** (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-acting-chair-andrea-lucas-sends-letters-20-law-firms-requesting-information-about-dei>) to these and other elite law firms regarding their touted DEI-practices. Specifically, Lucas sought information from certain firms to better understand whether their respective “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” (“DEI”) policies, programs, and practices in fact entailed or resulted in race- and sex-based disparate treatment against white or male employees, applicants, and training program participants, in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The letters inquired about potential disparate treatment in hiring, compensation, promotion, demotion, separation, and access to privileges of employment, including, but not limited to hiring and compensation for

summer associate programs and access to mentoring, sponsorship, leadership development, and other training and career development programs.

Today, the law firms and the EEOC entered into a settlement agreement. The firms chose to voluntarily resolve matters with the EEOC, without admission of liability, to avoid an extended dispute. Under the multi-year agreement, the law firms affirmed their commitment to lawful merit-based hiring, promotion, and retention; agreed not to engage in unlawful discrimination or preferences based on race, sex, or other protected characteristics, including in any policies, programs, and practices previously labeled, characterized, or framed as a diversity or DEI program; agreed to no longer categorize any lawful employment or practices (including those addressing equal employment opportunity, accessibility, or reasonable accommodation for religion, disability, or pregnancy) as DEI; and agreed to compliance monitoring.

“The statutory goal of Title VII is voluntary compliance with the law. We are pleased with the commitments made by Kirkland & Ellis, Latham & Watkins, Simpson Thacher, and A&O Shearman,” Lucas said. “We are hopeful these firms will be leaders in their industry by eliminating potentially unlawful DEI-based employment practices and returning to merit-based equal employment opportunity for all.”

For more information about when DEI initiatives, policies, programs, or practices may be unlawful under Title VII, check out EEOC’s recent technical assistance documents, **[What You Should Know About DEI-Related Discrimination at Work](https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-dei-related-discrimination-work)** (**<https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-dei-related-discrimination-work>**) and **[What To Do If You Experience Discrimination Related to DEI at Work](https://www.eeoc.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/One_Pagers_2025-2_%28002%29_508.pdf)** (**https://www.eeoc.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/One_Pagers_2025-2_%28002%29_508.pdf**).

The EEOC is the sole federal agency authorized to investigate and litigate against private companies and other private employers for violations of federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. For public employers, the EEOC shares jurisdiction with the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division; the EEOC is responsible for investigating public sector charges before referring them to DOJ for potential litigation. The EEOC also is responsible for coordinating the federal government’s employment antidiscrimination effort. More information is available at **www.eeoc.gov** (**<http://www.eeoc.gov/>**). Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our **[email updates](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new)** (**<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new>**).

