

## Tyson & Mendes Reaches Gender Parity In Equity Partners

By **Emma Cueto**

Law360 (June 12, 2020, 7:39 PM EDT) -- Civil defense firm Tyson & Mendes LLP announced Friday that with its two most recent equity partner promotions, the firm has achieved gender parity among equity partners, a percentage significantly higher than the industry average.

The firm, which has more than 150 attorneys and 10 offices across seven states, said that it reached the 50% threshold by promoting administrative partner Cayce Lynch and personal injury defense attorney Susan Oliver. In the legal industry as a whole, only about 19% of equity partners are women.

"Susan and Cayce have been instrumental in the growth and success of Tyson & Mendes," said managing partner Robert Tyson. "As equity partners, I cannot wait to see the continued positive impact they will have on our firm."

In addition to now having gender parity among equity partners, the firm said that about half of its attorneys are women, and its partnership overall is about 40% female. The firm also said women are overrepresented in administrative support and management staff; taking into account those roles alongside attorneys, the firm is 64% female, it said.

Hilarie Bass, former president of the American Bar Association and founder of the diversity-focused Bass Institute, told Law360 that achieving gender parity in equity partners is a notable accomplishment.

"Getting into the equity partnership ranks is often the most meaningful reflection of a firm's true commitment to the success of women lawyers," Bass said.

While she was happy about the numbers from Tyson & Mendes, however, Bass said the industry as a whole has a long way to go, and that similar milestones are probably a long way off for most firms.

"It's always wonderful to hear that there are more women being elevated to equity partner," she said. "The challenge is extrapolating that out to large global firms."

According to Law360's 2019 **Best Law Firms for Female Attorneys** rankings, which are grouped by firm size, even among firms that do well on gender metrics, larger firms tend to have a lower percentage of female equity partners.

Equity partners at Littler Mendelson PC, which ranked No. 1 among firms with 600 or more attorneys, were just shy of 30% female. Meanwhile, three firms in the 50- to 149-attorney category had achieved an equity partnership that is 50% or more female.

When it comes to making equity partner, gender-based obstacles can compound, Bass explained. In many firms, Bass said, women aren't given the same mentorship opportunities or the same chances to generate business, which is typically the biggest factor in being promoted from partner to equity partner.

Too often, Bass said, firms will focus on hiring more female attorneys, but won't commit to the types

of changes necessary to ensure women can rise through the ranks alongside their male colleagues.

And without more women in leadership roles, it will be harder to attract female talent in general, she added. If the industry is going to see more firms achieve gender parity among equity partners, more firms will have to make the commitment, Bass said.

--Editing by Alanna Weissman.