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NEWS & INSIGHTS

LIGHTFOOT PARTNER LANA OLSON SPEAKS ON THE GENDER WAGE GAP IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION AT DRI DIVERSITY FOR SUCCESS SEMINAR

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Lightfoot, Franklin & White LLC partner **Lana A. Olson** was a featured speaker at yesterday's Diversity for Success Seminar hosted by DRI, the leading organization of defense attorneys and in-house counsel. Olson's address was titled "An Unlevel Playing Field: America's Gender-Based Wage Gap, Binds of Discrimination, and a Path Toward Gender Equality."

In her speech, Olson explained that the gender wage gap is particularly acute in the legal profession and that the disparity increases with seniority, with female partners exhibiting the biggest differences in pay. Olson discussed some of the likely reasons for the existence (and persistence) of the wage gap among female lawyers — primarily the subjective aspects of law firm compensation systems that can allow implicit bias to impact compensation decisions — and provided thoughts on ways law firms and companies who hire lawyers can help to level the playing field.

"At its core, paying male and female lawyers equally for equal work is just the right thing to do," said Olson. "But aside from the basic human fairness component, there is also a tremendous business reason for law firms to ensure equality in pay. When women feel the very personal sting of being undervalued financially, they often 'vote with their feet' and leave. When that happens, firms not only lose talented female lawyers, but they also lose their significant investment in these women — women who could have gone on to be business generators for the firm if they'd stayed. Firms who want to be successful in today's legal environment simply must address the wage gap issue, and the way they can do that is to promote and fairly reward talented women lawyers."

Olson is a long-time member of DRI and **currently serves on the organization's Board of Directors as a National Director**. In the past, she chaired DRI's "Sharing Success" Women's Seminar and led its Women in the Law Committee from 2013 to 2015. Olson received the **Davis Carr Outstanding Committee Chair Award** for her service on the Women in the Law Committee.

At Lightfoot, Olson's practice focuses on defense litigation in matters involving product liability, catastrophic injury, environmental law, employment and general commercial issues. She has also served as assistant general counsel for a leading heavy truck component distributor for many years, managing all facets of the company's legal and compliance matters.