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4 More Law Firms To Usher In Associate Raises

By **Aebra Coe**

Law360 (June 15, 2021, 4:41 PM EDT) -- Four more law firms have announced they are implementing associate pay raises, with three matching the new Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP scale for compensation that ranges from \$202,500 to \$365,000 based on seniority, Law360 Pulse learned Tuesday.

BigLaw firms Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, Boies Schiller & Flexner LLP and O'Melveny & Myers LLP said they will match **the pay scale set by Davis Polk last week**, although with a slight tweak by Pillsbury. Texas-founded litigation boutique Brewer Attorneys & Counselors is also offering its associates raises, with first-year salaries starting at \$205,000, the firm said.

Boies Schiller and O'Melveny will pay associates just starting out \$202,500 and attorneys in the class of 2013 and earlier \$365,000, adhering to the Davis Polk scale, while Pillsbury will match the scale up to the class of 2014 while also including its counsel- and special counsel-level attorneys in the raises, which go into effect July 1. Counsel at Pillsbury will be paid a \$365,000 base salary and special counsel will get a 7.4% raise, the firm said.

The pay raises that **have begun to sweep the industry** were launched after Milbank LLP **announced it was raising pay** to a scale that starts at \$200,000 for first-year associates last Thursday.

As of Tuesday, more than 20 law firms have either matched the Milbank or Davis Polk pay scales, raising pay from an industry standard that started at \$190,000 for junior lawyers and reached \$340,000 for senior associates.

The shakeup in pay comes as U.S. law firms choose where to direct the big profits they pulled in last year, with many reaping the benefits of a remote workplace and other budget cuts that were implemented early on in the coronavirus pandemic alongside increases in revenue.

Many legal recruiters report they are busier than they've ever been right now as firms scramble to hire attorneys who can accommodate an uptick in legal work the firms are experiencing.

In addition to the raises, many large law firms offered special bonuses to associates last fall and then again this spring. The bonuses are being paid in addition to associates' usual year-end bonuses and base pay.

The bonuses last fall ranged from \$7,500 to \$40,000 based on seniority, and those announced this spring that are being distributed throughout the year range from \$12,000 to \$64,000.

Pillsbury, Boies Schiller and O'Melveny are among the law firms that have offered associates special bonuses.

In an internal memo to the firm that was obtained by Law360 Pulse, Boies Schiller's three managing partners said that the firm is aiming to continue to be a leader in associate compensation, because of how "critical" the attorneys are to the firm and its clients.

"On behalf of the entire partnership, we want to thank you again for your commitment to the firm and your excellent work on behalf of the firm's clients," the memo said.

A statement released publicly Tuesday by O'Melveny & Myers said, "Thanks in large part to the efforts of our associates and counsel, our business remains strong, and we are well-positioned to meet the needs of our clients and our communities."

Unlike most of the firms engaging in pay raises and bonuses this past year, Brewer is a smaller boutique with 10 associates. The firm was founded in Dallas in 1984 as Bickel & Brewer and now has a new name and offices in both Dallas and New York.

In an internal memo shared with Law360 Pulse, founding partner William Brewer said that as of July 1 all first-year associate salaries will increase to \$205,000 and the firm's other lawyers, consultants, and professionals will also receive salary increases, based on merit and tenure.

"We want adjustments in our compensation model to benefit professionals at all levels of the organization," the memo said. "We are pleased to recognize the contributions of our professionals and their commitment to the firm."

--Editing by Peter Rozovsky.