

# DAYTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Dayton law firms among top in nation for diverse hiring efforts

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The need for greater diversity and inclusion efforts doesn't eclipse any sector of the business community, including in various professional services.

At least two Dayton-area law firms are making concerted efforts to diversify their hiring efforts.

Taft Law and Porter Wright, both with Dayton offices, are among the nation's law firms to earn Mansfield Rule Certification. That certification requires law firms to consider at least 30% women, lawyers of color, LGBTQ+ lawyers, and lawyers with disabilities for key leadership roles.

"Diversity and inclusion are not just words to us," said Robert J. Hicks, Taft chairman and managing partner. "In every way, they are a complete mindset that is now a fundamental part of the firm's DNA and an intangible hallmark and fabric of who we are as an organization."

The Mansfield Program – named after Arabella Mansfield, the first woman lawyer in the U.S. – was

developed by the Diversity Lab, a national incubator for innovative ideas and solutions to boost diversity and inclusion in law.

"A lot of people talk about diversity and inclusion but this is a good way to be accountable and actually see results," said Tami Kirby, partner in charge in Dayton at Porter Wright.

Both the Porter Wright and Taft Law firms take it a step further. Both firms also have the Mansfield Rule Plus Certification, meaning at least 30% diverse representation in their leadership roles and lateral hiring.

At Taft, the company has adopted several practices in recent years to promote a healthy work-life balance, including 16 weeks of paid maternity/paternity leave for attorneys and staff. As well, over 90% of its C-level officer positions are held by those of women; people of color or other diverse characteristics.

Kirby said the Dayton office – with a total workforce of 15 people – has an exceptional diversity rate of 75%. The firm is especially strong on hiring women.

"Our focus has been on attorneys



Tami Hart Kirby is a partner in charge with the law firm of Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP in Dayton.

and our summer associates and law clerks," Kirby said. "It has not included staff up to this point. But there's always a desire to have a diverse pool of candidates."

Porter Wright, with 500 total employees, has eight offices across the U.S., including in Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Washington, D.C.

Company-wide at Porter Wright, 41% of associates are women; 80% of law clerks are diverse; and 60% of summer associates in 2019 were women.

"This is more of a focus and priority," Kirby said. "We talk the talk but do we walk the walk."