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## THE 2010 A-LIST

**Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP**

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*Four firms, including two first-timers,  
join the 2010 A-List.*

# Turning Pro



*By Amy Kolz*

**THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE** more they stay the same. That's the best way to summarize our eighth annual A-List, our effort to look beyond pure dollars to quantify the qualities that define the 20 most successful law firms. This year's list was rife with movement: Four firms fell off the list, four joined, and six of the 13 firms that changed ranks from 2009 moved by six or more places. At the same time, we had a sense of déjà vu: Only two of the four firms joining the list this year, Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker and Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, are first-time A-Listers. The other two—Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett—are A-List veterans. Similarly, Munger, Tolles & Olson held on to the top spot for the third year in a row, with a score only two points less than its 2009 A-List total. New York-based Hughes Hubbard & Reed came in second place for the second year in a row. The difference in total score between the top and the bottom of the list shrunk, but only slightly, from 140 points in 2009 to 137 points this year. And as in past years, competition was especially stiff toward the bottom of the list: The difference in total score between firm number 11 and firm number 20 was less than half the difference between numbers one and ten.

The methodology behind the A-List is relatively simple. We look at four factors: revenue per lawyer, pro bono commitment, diversity among lawyers, and associate satisfaction. Our formula gives more weight to the first two fac-

tors: We double a firm's scores for revenue per lawyer and pro bono, and then add scores for diversity and associate satisfaction.

Pro bono was a game changer. The one unifying trend among the two A-List newcomers and two alumni was a sizable increase in pro bono scores, with healthy jumps ranging from 7 percent (Skadden) to 64 percent (Finnegan). Paul, Hastings debuted on the A-List at number ten (the highest ranking for a newcomer since 2007) with a noticeable assist from its pro bono score of 194, an almost 15 percent increase from the year before.

Associate satisfaction, always a volatile score for firms, remained so this year, with an average 23 percent swing among the 20 A-List firms. That type of movement may not be too surprising, given that this was the first A-List that incorporated results following the wave of layoffs in early 2009. Deep declines in associate satisfaction also contributed to the exit of four firms from last year's A-List roster: Howrey, Irell & Manella, Kirkland & Ellis, and Sullivan & Cromwell. At the same time, Debevoise & Plimpton's commitment to lockstep pay and communication with associates during an uncertain time earned it a 44 percent increase in its associate satisfaction score on our annual midlevel survey, which helped propel the New York firm to number three on the 2010 A-List. Associates' power may have diminished during the recession, but not when it comes to the A-List.

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Paul, Weiss  
New York

Paul, Weiss leaped 14 places in this year's A-List with a total score of 1,075, a 9 percent increase from 2009. The New York-based firm increased its total pro bono hours by more than 50 percent and boosted its pro bono score by 30 percent, the second-highest pro bono increase among this year's A-List firms. "It was very important to me to step up our level of pro bono commitment [when I became chair]," says Brad Karp. Among the firm's blockbuster pro bono matters was a federal district court victory for Disability Advocates Inc., in a suit against New York State agencies and officials that sought to eliminate unnecessary institutionalization of the mentally ill. There was also a substantial increase in pro bono matters handled by nonlitigation and corporate lawyers, adds Karp.



\* Paul, Weiss's pro bono hours soared more than 50 percent last year as the firm led high-profile cases, such as a suit against New York to eliminate unnecessary institutionalization of the mentally ill.

## 2010 ■ The A-List

Rank	Firm	Total Score*	RPL Score	Pro Bono Score	Associate Satisfaction Score	Diversity Score
1	Munger, Tolles & Olson <i>Los Angeles</i>	1,127	190	181	186	199
2	Hughes Hubbard & Reed <i>New York</i>	1,102	181	186	174	194
3	Debevoise & Plimpton <i>New York</i>	1,094	175	193	191	167
4	Davis Polk & Wardwell <i>New York</i>	1,089	197	183	141	188
5	Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr <i>National</i>	1,077	186	189	171	156
6	<b>Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton &amp; Garrison <i>New York</i></b>	<b>1,075</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>189</b>
7	Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher <i>National</i>	1,072	186	190	197	123
8	Skadden <i>National</i>	1,056	193	191	154	134
9	Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton <i>International</i>	1,049	175	160	184	195
10	Paul, Hastings <i>National</i>	1,037	172	194	135	170
11	Weil, Gotshal & Manges <i>New York</i>	1,032	187	156	165	181
12	Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy <i>New York</i>	1,027	192	178	103	184
13	Latham & Watkins <i>National</i>	1,023	172	196	122	165
14	Covington & Burling <i>Washington, D.C.</i>	1,020	161	197	160	144
15	Morrison & Foerster <i>San Francisco</i>	1,009	160	180	138	191
16	Simpson Thacher <i>New York</i>	1,008	191	166	113	181
17	Arnold & Porter <i>Washington, D.C.</i>	1,004	155	199	118	178
17	O'Melveny & Myers <i>Los Angeles</i>	1,004	169	184	124	174
19	Finnegan, Henderson <i>Washington, D.C.</i>	1,000	175	146	187	171
20	Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe <i>National</i>	990	145	182	151	185

\*The total score was calculated by doubling the firm's RPL and pro bono scores and adding those to the firm's associate satisfaction and diversity scores. In 2009 we changed our method of calculating diversity scores. Go to [americanlawyer.com/alist](http://americanlawyer.com/alist) to see the A-List methodology.

## METHODOLOGY

*How we determine the A-List scores.*

**TO COME UP WITH THE A-LIST, WE START WITH THE RANKINGS** from four surveys that rate Am Law 200 firms' performances in several areas for 2010. We convert the firms' ranks to points by inverting the score. Then we weight their values to find the overall scores. These are the four components of The A-List:

■ **REVENUE PER LAWYER (RPL) RANKS** come from our Am Law 100 and Am Law 200 reports that appeared in the May and June issues this year. The financials are based on fiscal year 2009. We take a firm's rank and invert it to come up with its points. For example, the number one firm gets 200 points, and the number 200 firm receives one point.

■ **PRO BONO RANKS** appear in the July 2010 issue as well. We collect information on a firm's pro bono activity when we conduct our Am Law 200 reporting. We look at per capita hours and the number of firm lawyers who performed at least 20 hours of service annually to come up with the ranks. Then we invert the rank to come up with point values, just as we do with RPL.

■ **ASSOCIATE SATISFACTION RANKS** are determined when we survey third-, fourth-, and fifth-year midlevel associates. The associate rankings come from our August 2009 issue. Any firm can participate in this survey. Last year 146 firms had at least ten responses, which qualified those firms for a national ranking. The top-ranked firm gets a score of 200, and the bottom-ranked gets a score of 55 when we calculate the numbers.

■ **DIVERSITY RANKS** come from Minority Law Journal's Diversity Scorecard, which ranks firms based on their percentage of minority lawyers. The firms surveyed include The National Law Journal's NLJ 250, plus Am Law 200 firms that didn't make the NLJ's head count cutoff. The rankings we used for The A-List come from the Minority Law Journal's Summer 2010 issue, in which 202 firms provided diversity data. In this case the top-ranked firm gets a score of 200, and all firms below the rank of 200 get a single point. In the past, rankings were based only on the minority percentage of all U.S. attorneys. This year we've revised our rankings to stress the importance of hiring and promoting minority attorneys to partnership positions. Our new diversity score was created by adding the minority percentage of all U.S. attorneys at the firms surveyed to the minority percentage of all U.S. partners at those firms.

Firms that did not participate in the associate satisfaction survey and that did not provide diversity or pro bono statistics did not receive any points for those surveys.

To come up with the A-List score, we double the points for both revenue per lawyer and pro bono and add them to the scores from the associate satisfaction and diversity surveys. Then we rank the firms by their total scores. The top 20 form The A-List. If you want to determine an Am Law 200 firm's score, here's the formula: (RPL score x 2) + (PB score x 2) + AS score + D score = total score. A complete list of rankings is posted online at [americanlawyer.com](http://americanlawyer.com).

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