

Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox P.L.L.C.

2019 TOP 100 LAW FIRM HIGHLIGHTS



TOP 150 UNDER 150

- #5 BEST MIDSIZE LAW FIRM FOR DIVERSITY
- #5 BEST INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY BOUTIQUE



UPPERS

- “It truly is a team atmosphere.”
- “Quality work for big clients.”
- “The work is challenging, exciting, and requires my A-game every day.”

THE FIRM SAYS

Sterne Kessler’s summer associate program not only provides our incoming class with challenging responsibilities and opportunities but also allows them to experience our collegial firm culture. From week one, summer associates work closely with directors and associates on real client work. They have opportunities to meet with clients, attend workshops/trainings, and actively participate in monthly practice group meetings. The program also provides mentoring and coaching, in addition to having mid-point and end-of-summer evaluations, allowing our summer associates to see how they have progressed. We take pride in our firm culture and have been recognized for five consecutive years by *The Washington Post* as a “Top Workplace.” In addition to engaging in client work, our summer associates participate in an array of firm social activities and fun group outings, enjoy our fully staffed barista bar, and make use of our skee ball and air hockey games in our lunchroom.

THE SCOOP

Founded in 1978 by Robert Greene Sterne and Ronald Snider as Snider & Sterne, now, Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox has grown through the ensuing four decades to become one of the leading IP boutiques in the nation, with a focus on the protection, transfer, and enforcement of intellectual property rights. The Washington, DC-based firm employs approximately 130 attorneys and represents clients like Google, Adidas, Apple, Bristol-Myers Squibb, AbbVie, Biogen, Broadcom, Veeam Software, and the University of Maryland.

Promoting Human Rights through IP

In 2012, Sterne Kessler launched its Intellectual Property and Human Rights Pro Bono Practice, the first of its kind, with a focus on the interplay of intellectual property principles and human rights. Through this program the firm has promoted the conservation of biodiversity through ethical sourcing practices for the Union for Ethical BioTrade, protected indigenous Peruvians from biopiracy on behalf of the National Working Group on Maca, and protected the trademarks of Operation Second Chance and the Discovery Creek Children’s Museum of Washington. The practice was recognized as the winner of the *Financial Times’* Most Innovative North American Lawyers 2015 award in the category of “Innovation in a Social Responsibility Project,” with special commendation to director, *pro bono* practice leader and name partner Jorge Goldstein. More recently, in response to associate interest, the firm has expanded into more areas of pro bono work, including immigration.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

HIRING PROCESS

- “Strong technical background, including work experience such as in a technical industry as a scientist or engineer, or co-op experience, is important. Law school attended does not seem to matter as long as these other factors are good. Associates come from many different law schools and cities.”

FIRM INFO

CONTACT INFO

1100 New York Ave. NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 371-2600
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THE STATS

No. of attorneys: 130
Managing Partner: Michael B. Ray
Recruiting Chair: Paul A. Ainsworth

BASE SALARY (2018)

1st year: \$190,000
After the first year, salaries are meritocratic, not lock-step, though generally follow the “Cravath scale.”
Summer associate (2L): \$3,400/week
Summer associate (1L): \$3,100/week

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

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Legal Recruiting Manager
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ASSOCIATE LIFE**Satisfaction**

- “I love my job and the people I work with.”
- “I am very satisfied. I am tasked with a lot of challenging work and have been able to do things many of my law school peers as a second year have not, such as take a deposition or draft expert reports from scratch.”

Firm Culture

- “Sterne Kessler has a very collegial atmosphere. People don’t socialize much outside of work, but everyone is very friendly at the office. It is definitely a team environment.”
- “The firm makes a concerted effort to put on social events so that we are not stuck in the office all the time. They provide free food/drinks and provide a good opportunity to just hang out and relax. People’s politics are not readily apparent; people are generally respectful of everyone’s views.”
- “The culture is very collaborative and everyone is willing to help mentor younger associates.”

Associate/Partner Relations

- “Associates and partners have great working relationships at the firm. I feel respected and challenged to become a better attorney when working with the partners. Regarding transparency, the firm is very transparent regarding performance and finances. Each quarter, the directors present on the current state of the firm and how the firm has performed. Regarding performance reviews, reviews are conducted once per year and are also transparent with regards to comments provided by directors.”
- “I have always felt that the partners at the firm fully support me, treat me with respect, and value the contributions I make. We have annual reviews, in addition to informal feedback at any time, where we discuss progress I have made and make goals together for the upcoming year.”

Compensation

- “The firm offers a great package. Dollar amounts work out to top market when bonuses and other compensation is factored in.”
- “Compensation is very appropriate and raises are merit-based. Our bonuses are smaller than most of the ‘big law’ firms, but I think that is also reflective of the reduced demand placed on associates. The firm also pays a portion of medical insurance premiums.”

Quality of Work

- “My work is diverse and appropriate for my level I am trusted to manage projects and more junior associates. I am able to build the mix of work that I desire—about a 50/50 split between prosecution and *inter partes* reviews.”
- “I’ve had the opportunity to manage global patent portfolios for some of the largest corporations in the world, defend key patents in post-grant proceedings with parallel litigation, play key roles in patent diligence for several deals and potential deals totaling over \$100M, and be exposed to some great pro bono opportunities. I do not feel underutilized.”
- “I have been tasked with nothing but substantive work. At first, I started with simpler tasks, but as I’ve grown into my role as a 2nd year, I’ve been given much more challenging work and sometimes work that usually older associates would complete.”

Training & Mentoring

- “There are more opportunities than there is time to take advantage of them. The firm is very supportive of its associates’ professional development.”
- “We have a mentoring program and a point person program. The mentor is a director who an associate can go to with career advice. They will go out for dinner/drinks at least quarterly, if not more often. The point person program is a director who manages work flow and is there for any complaints about the work or issues with other directors on ongoing cases.”

Pro Bono Commitment

- “Jorge Goldstein is a pioneer in leveraging IP attorneys’ skills to promote economic, social, and cultural rights to disadvantaged populations. I’ve had the pleasure of working with some pro bono clients on patent matters, and look forward to getting started in the firm’s nascent immigration practice (championed by Sal Bezos).”

Diversity Efforts

- “The firm is continually and actively encouraging and seeking diversity in the firm.”
- “After discussing with my law school peers, I have learned that Sterne Kessler is very diverse regarding gender, race, orientation, and people with disabilities. The hiring directors are very open to diverse candidates.”
- “The firm seems to have plenty of diversity. Gender mix looks about even, minority mix is better than previous firms, a number of LGBT individuals, etc. I’m not privy to efforts in that area, but the composition of the office is pretty diverse.”