

Kirkland & Ellis Partner Sandra Goldstein May Be Highest Paid Female Attorney in Big Law

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Sandra Goldstein.

Photo courtesy of Law.com.[/caption]

Summary: Sandra Goldstein left Cravath, Swaine & Moore for Kirkland & Ellis, where she will be paid an impressive annual salary.

Sandra Goldstein may be *the* most well-paid female attorney in Big Law. According to [Law.com](https://www.law.com), she is expected to bring in \$11 million dollars a year for the next five years at Kirkland & Ellis. This does not include her sign-on bonus.

Goldstein was a partner at Cravath, Swaine & Moore, but she left for Kirkland & Ellis to practice securities litigation and commercial litigation. She attended NYU Law School in 1987, and she built her career at Cravath. She was the youngest associate to make partner at the age of 30, according to Law.com.

Goldstein credits her mother, a trial lawyer and then a judge in New York, as a role model for her career. She said that she learned to work hard based on her example.

"My mother was committed to her career and her three children. There was never a time in my childhood when I wished she was present. She was always there, and I never wanted for attention. If she was able to do it, I could, too, because she had it much harder," Goldstein said. "My mother graduated No. 1 from Brooklyn Law School, but it was not acceptable at the time for a woman to be in that position. The school held a private ceremony for her, but it was a male student who gave the graduation speech. When I graduated from NYU [law school], I didn't feel like a pariah the way my mother did."

News of Goldstein's impressive salary comes at a time when women are underrepresented and underpaid in Big Law. In 2016, Major, Lindsey & Africa [released a report](#) that female partners were paid 44% less on average than male partners. The organization said that the main reason for the gap was because salaries were based on who brought in the most business. The report found that women average \$1.7 million worth of business while men bring in \$2.6 million on average.

In recent years, some female BigLaw partners have fought back against their lower pay by filing lawsuits. For instance, Steptoe & Johnson [was sued in 2017](#) for gender discrimination. Attorney Ji-In Houck filed a national class action, saying that the women there were compensated less than their male counterparts.

"Despite paying lip service to diversity in its workforce, and even counseling the firm's own clients on policies to avoid pay discrimination, defendant Steptoe & Johnson LLP ... subjects its female attorneys to unequal pay," Houck said.

Law.com asked Goldstein what female attorneys could do to succeed in the competitive field, and she shared the three qualities that lawyers needed to make it.

"The three most important qualities for the job are judgment, tenacity and confidence," Goldstein said. "They have to work in tandem, and that's true for women and men. To the extent that women might have less confidence than men, sometimes they have to say to themselves, 'You can do this.' You have to picture yourself at that table, in that courtroom. A lot of things are nerve-wrecking, and you need to psyche yourself up. So if you need to talk to yourself, do it. The more you succeed, the more you will succeed."

- [Women and Minority Partners Continue to Make Small Strides](#)
- [Women and Minorities Still Lacking in Large Firms](#)
- [Female BigLaw Partners Fighting Gender Pay Inequality with Lawsuits](#)

What do you think about Kirkland & Ellis? Let us know in the comments below.