

Top-tier Law Firm Announces Postponement of Entry Dates for New Associates in Select Practice Areas



Fenwick & West, a prominent Biglaw firm known for its expertise in the technology sector, has recently joined the ranks of firms opting to defer the start dates for their incoming first-year associate classes. Following in the footsteps of Gunderson and Cooley, Fenwick's decision reflects the growing demand expected at the beginning of the new year and the firm's commitment to ensuring a strong foundation for its new associates, particularly in corporate practices.

While it is never an easy announcement for firms to make, the memo sent to incoming associates at Fenwick, dated May 30, revealed the revised start dates and additional details regarding the deferrals. According to the memo, first-year associates in corporate and technology transactions will now commence their roles on January 16, 2024. On the other hand, entry-level litigation and tax associates will still begin their positions on October 16, 2023.

Recognizing the financial impact of these deferrals on the affected associates, Fenwick is taking proactive measures to provide support. The memo disclosed that incoming associates in the corporate and tech transactions practices will receive a \$15,000 stipend to assist with living expenses during the deferral period. This stipend exceeds the \$10,000 stipend offered by Cooley, another leading law firm implementing deferrals. Fenwick's decision to provide a higher stipend reflects their commitment to alleviating any unexpected financial burdens faced by their associates during this time of uncertainty.

Despite our request for comment, Fenwick & West has not yet responded. However, the firm's deferral decision clearly indicates the challenges faced by the legal industry in the current climate. With the evolving landscape and increasing client demands, firms are carefully reevaluating their strategies to ensure the success of their incoming associates and maintain their position as industry leaders.

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For those impacted by Fenwick's deferral decision, we extend our best wishes and support during this transitional period. It is important to remember that these deferrals do not reflect an individual's abilities or potential; rather, they are a response to the complex circumstances faced by firms and the need to adapt to market conditions.

As the legal industry continues to navigate these unprecedented times, it is crucial for both firms and associates to remain agile and resilient. While delayed start dates may bring temporary setbacks, they also present personal and professional growth opportunities. Associates can utilize this additional time to further develop their skills, expand their knowledge base, and explore alternative career paths within the legal field.

Fenwick & West's decision to defer start dates for certain practice groups reflects the dynamic nature of the legal industry and the firm's commitment to providing the best possible start for their incoming associates. By offering a generous stipend to support their deferred associates, Fenwick sets an example for other firms in prioritizing the financial well-being of their future attorneys. As the legal landscape continues to evolve, it is crucial for aspiring lawyers to remain adaptable and optimistic in the face of changing circumstances.