

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

2024 VAULT PROFILE HIGHLIGHTS



ABOUT THE FIRM

Founded in 1978, 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 DC-based firm employs approximately 150 attorneys and represents clients like Roku, Adidas, Apple, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Teva, PepsiCo, and the University of California.

Promoting Human Rights Through IP

Sterne Kessler launched its award-winning Intellectual Property and Human Rights Pro Bono Practice—the first of its kind—over ten years ago with a singular focus on the interplay of intellectual property principles and human rights. The practice aims to empower disenfranchised and impoverished communities seeking to promote and protect their IP assets by integrating IP law with economic, cultural, 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. More recently, in response to associate interest, the firm has expanded into more areas of pro bono work, including immigration.

THE FIRM’S PERSPECTIVE

In short, we’re proud to be one of the most highly regarded IP specialty law firms in the world. Our team of attorneys, registered patent agents, students, and technical specialists include some of the country’s most respected practitioners of IP law tackling innovations across a broad spectrum of industries. Our practitioners hold over 50 masters and over 60 doctorate degrees in science or engineering and represent Fortune 500 companies, entrepreneurs, start-ups, inventors, venture capital firms, and universities in a client service-driven environment.

We recognize that it is the talent and dynamism of each individual at Sterne Kessler that makes our success possible. With that in mind, we’ve cultivated an environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating with just the right touch of exuberance. We’re truly committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and *Law360* has ranked Sterne Kessler among the top five firms for overall diversity and among the top three firms for equity partnership diversity. We earned our Mansfield Certification in May 2023.

We’re honored that our attorneys and staff have voted Sterne Kessler as a *Washington Post* “Top Workplace” for 10 years running, and we’ve been a *Washington Business Journal* “Best Place to Work” 11 times! Interested in opportunities to join the firm and enjoy great professional growth opportunities and our dynamic culture? If so, we’re interested in you. Visit our “Careers” section at sternekessler.com to learn more and take the first step in applying for a position. We look forward to hearing from you!

NOTABLE MATTERS

- In the summer of 2023, a pivotal *pro bono* case that the firm handled in collaboration with the Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) concluded with a big win. The matter that began in 2018 was a first-of-its-kind class action lawsuit to ensure that appropriate policies were in place so unaccompanied immigrant children would not be kept apart from their families.
- The firm represents 2020 Nobel Prize winners, Jennifer A. Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier and the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) team on patent matters related to their groundbreaking CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing technology. The groundbreaking technology has profoundly affected biology, agriculture, and medicine and is poised to treat thousands of intractable diseases.
- The firm and several individual attorneys earned top rankings in Patexia’s 2023 PTAB Intelligence Report. Of particular note, Sterne Kessler was rated the best performing law firm representing patent owners, topping the list of 100 ranked firms in the category.
- Sterne Kessler was instrumental in *In re Beauregard*, the 1995 case that led to the USPTO developing guidelines for patenting software.
- In 1988, Sterne Kessler secured a win on appeal in *In re Wands*, still today the fundamental decision on enablement for biological patent claims.

FIRM INFO

LOCATIONS

Washington, DC (HQ)

MAJOR DEPARTMENTS

Patent Litigation • Utility Patents • Design Patents • Business Methods • Due Diligence • Hatch Waxman: Generic & Proprietary • Interferences • ITC Section 337 Investigations • Licensing • Trial & Appeals • Patent Office Litigation (PTAB) • Patent Prosecution • Strategic IP Advice • Trade Secret/Unfair Competition • Trademark & Brand Protection

See firm website for complete list of practice areas and industries.

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OUR SURVEY SAYS

ASSOCIATE LIFE

Firm Culture

- “Very social firm, day to day atmosphere is like working with close friends. They provide all the resources you need to grow as an attorney and to develop your personal brand.”
- “In general, the work atmosphere and interactions among lawyers and staff are very pleasant and respectful. There are many opportunities to socialize at internal events and after hours, and the firm works hard to foster personal interactions, mentoring, and get-togethers.”

Associate/Partner Relations

- “Associates know every detail of the happenings at the firm on a business level, and I’ve developed many close friendships with directors.”
- “The directors at SKGF are fantastic. Very supportive and help you learn. No egos, just down-to-earth, and help you improve.”
- “I think the directorship is great, especially in litigation. They very clearly want to mentor you, and they provide you opportunities to grow. We receive annual reviews, typically with your advising director and another director you’ve worked with in the past year. They give you real feedback from several director across the firm.”

Hours

- “We get to pick our billable hour requirement, but I am on track to exceed my requirement, so I have more work than I need. We have a HUGE amount of flexibility in when and where we work, which is a major plus.”
- “The firm allows timekeepers to set their own hours goals and adjusts your salary proportionately. This is not only fair in terms of compensation, it’s generous of the firm because it allows for customizing the work-life balance you want personally.”

Compensation

- “Largely follows industry standards. More clarity on bonuses would be good, but bonuses are fair.”

Quality of Work

- “They will give me anything I feel I’m up to and will encourage me to step out of my comfort zone. I’ve grown tremendously after lateraling here.”
- “I have an active U.S. and international prosecution docket, as well as a substantial litigation practice. I have been encouraged to learn and try just about anything, under an appropriate level of supervision.”

Technology & Innovation

- “The firm is quite technologically advanced, so working remotely has largely been seamless.”
- “The firm is committed to a hybrid work environment and has taken many opportunities to support in-person, remote, and hybrid work on

an individual basis. All in-person and all remote meetings are easy and happen with little issue. The firm is effectively implementing technology that makes hybrid meetings more convenient.”

Wellness Efforts

- “The firm hosts events here and there for health and wellness. Our new office is set to have even more health and wellness benefits. I believe the firm respects mental health and supports healthy mental health habits; I think more can still be done as this job can be mentally tolling.”

Training & Mentoring

- “I feel like I can always pick up the phone and chat with a director about just about anything. I also have an assigned mentor, and the firm encourages choosing to voluntarily switch mentors once in a while to round out your training.”
- “Active training schedule available, and plenty of additional roundtables to learn the latest court opinions or rule changes. Mentoring program is great. All associates have a senior associate to help guide them through the first year and a career mentor to help navigate personal development, docket management, and performance reviews. The support has been amazing and has helped me to shape the type of work and clients I get to work on/with.”

Career Outlook

- “The firm has helped me develop a book of business and lots of client relations.”
- “I feel very much that if I want to become a director, I can. The path to do so, and the associated expectations, are very clearly articulated to associates. Alternatively, I could choose counsel, which is a viable option many associates have taken.”

Notable Perks

- “Firm offers many high-quality benefits, including work-from-home allowances and transit allowances to defray personal costs.”

Fun Facts

- “My firm has been involved in several high-profile Supreme Court and Federal Circuit patent disputes that have reshaped the landscape of American patent law.”
- “We probably have more attorneys with PhDs than some colleges have professors with PhDs.”

DIVERSITY EFFORTS

- “There is a strong Diversity Committee which plans activities and seminars. The makeup of the firm seems diverse.”
- “I think we have had meaningful diversity efforts for a long time and continue to build on them each year. We generally have multiple programs offered every month dedicated to these areas. Currently, we do not offer any billable credit for diversity-related activities.”