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Pepper Hamilton Increases Starting Pay for All Offices

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Pepper Hamilton has increased pay for all of its offices, moving the Philadelphia office starting salary to \$125,000.

Each of the firm's offices will have the \$10,000 increase, with the exception of Detroit and Harrisburg. Those offices will go up \$7,000, according to firm executive partner Robert E. Heideck.

The increases will be uniform throughout each associate level in each office, so every associate's salary in the Philadelphia office will increase by \$10,000. The increases are effective April 1.

This pay hike is, in effect, the second one for the firm this year. When preparing its budget for 2006, the firm instituted increases for each associate level on an average of \$9,000. This latest increase is in addition to that, Heideck said.

Pepper Hamilton associates were also paid for their efforts in 2005 through \$2.3 million in bonuses that were handed out for the number of hours worked and performance, Heideck said. He said the decision to bump up associate pay was market driven, and the cost will be covered through the firm's expense contingency in the 2006 budget as well as through partnership profits. Pepper Hamilton joins a string of Philadelphia firms that have increased starting salaries, the most recent being Blank Rome, which announced its increase Thursday.

Blank Rome bumped up first-year pay from \$115,000 to \$125,000 in Philadelphia, effective immediately. First-year associates in the firm's New York and Washington, D.C., offices will now make \$135,000 to start.

Firm leaders are still working out the details for how the increase will affect subsequent associate levels.

The salary trend started when DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary announced in January that it was increasing its starting salary to \$125,000 in Philadelphia. At that time, that was the highest-paying starting associate position in town.

The same day, Drinker Biddle & Reath announced that it would do away with its base/bonus model and make the base pay for first-years \$125,000 as well. Wolf Block Schorr & Solis-Cohen upped the ante in mid-February, moving to \$125,000 for first-year salaries. Duane Morris joined them that day as well.

Not to be beat, Morgan Lewis & Bockius announced the same day that it would increase starting salaries in Philadelphia to \$135,000 while moving its New York first-year associates to \$145,000.

Dechert increased its starting salary this week to \$135,000 as well. Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll increased its starting salary to \$125,000 effective March 1. They were also one of the only firms in the area to implement the \$10,000 increase uniformly for all associate levels until Pepper Hamilton did the same in this latest increase.

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