

Seven partners depart law firm Willkie Farr to join Cooley after Trump deal



Signage is seen at the legal offices of the law firm Willkie Farr & Gallagher in New York City, New York, U.S., May 19, 2021. REUTERS/Andrew Kelly/File Photo [Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab](#)

June 13 (Reuters) - A group of seven partners is leaving Willkie Farr & Gallagher, which [struck a deal](#) with U.S. President Donald Trump in April to avert an executive order targeting its business, to join Cooley, which is representing one of the law firms fighting Trump's orders. Cooley on Friday said Simona Agnolucci, Benedict Hur, Joshua Anderson, Tiffany Lin, Jonathan Patchen, Michael Rome and Eduardo Santacana are joining the firm as litigation partners in San Francisco.

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The lawyers leaving New York-founded Willkie, which has more than 1,200 lawyers, are among the latest to depart from major U.S. firms that have made deals with Trump.

Agnolucci and Hur, who were both leaders of Willkie's San Francisco office, did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Friday. Agnolucci was also a member of the firm's executive committee.

The New York Times, which first reported the departures earlier on Friday, cited an unnamed source who said Agnolucci and Hur had told others they were disappointed that Willkie had capitulated to Trump. Reuters could not independently confirm the report.

Asked about the departures, a Willkie spokesperson said "we wish them well" and had no further comment.

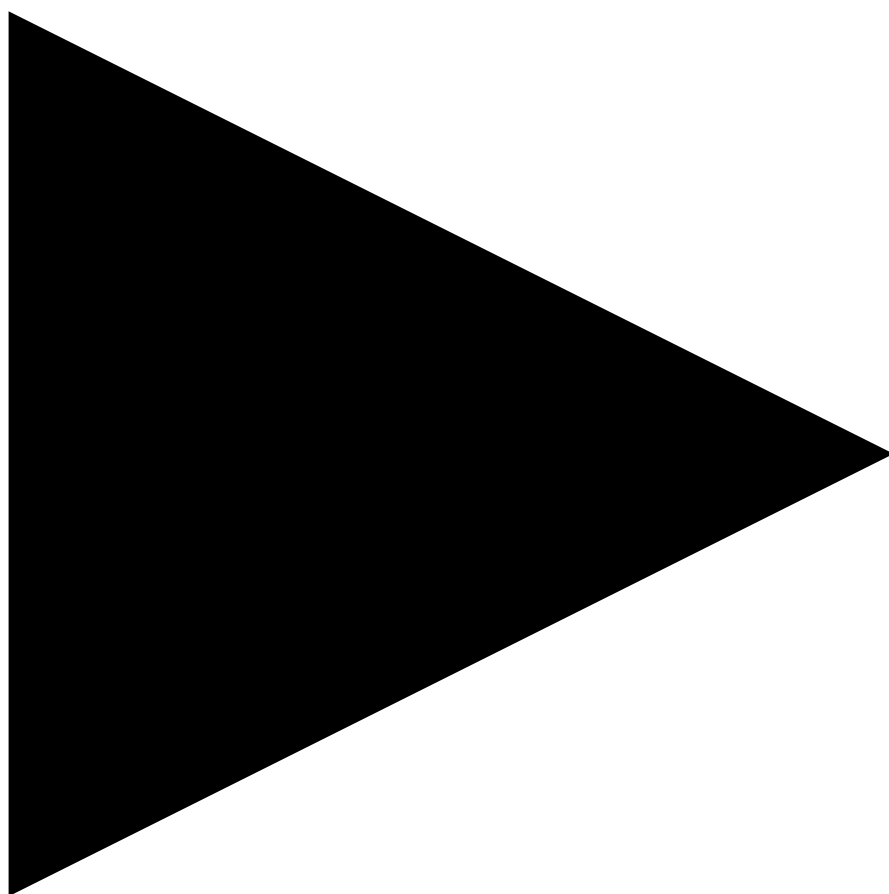
Some of the former Willkie lawyers have represented major tech clients on court matters. Agnolucci, Hur and Patchen were on Google's defense team in [litigation](#) led by the state of Texas that led to a \$1.8 billion settlement.

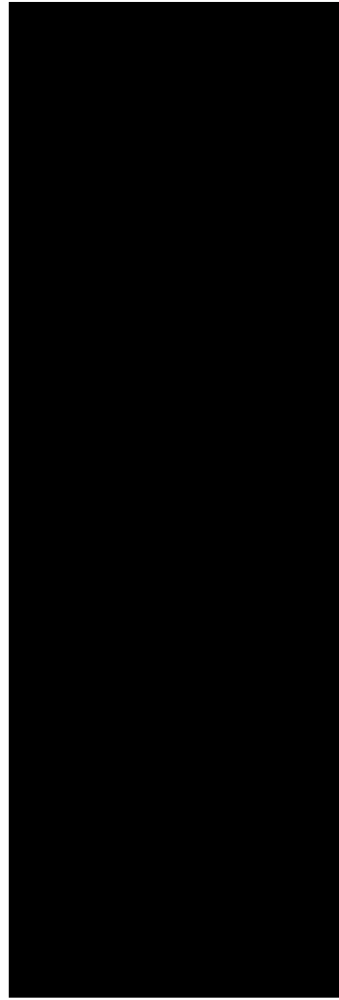
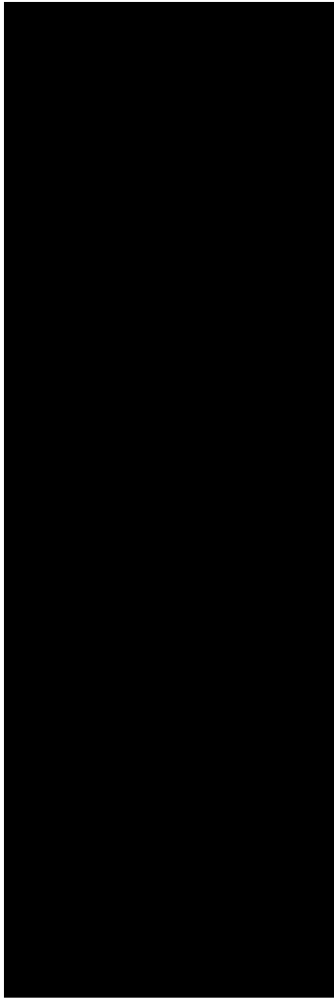
There was widespread dissatisfaction in Willkie's San Francisco office over the firm's agreement with the administration, according to a source familiar with the matter who said as many as 15 associates have expressed interest in leaving.

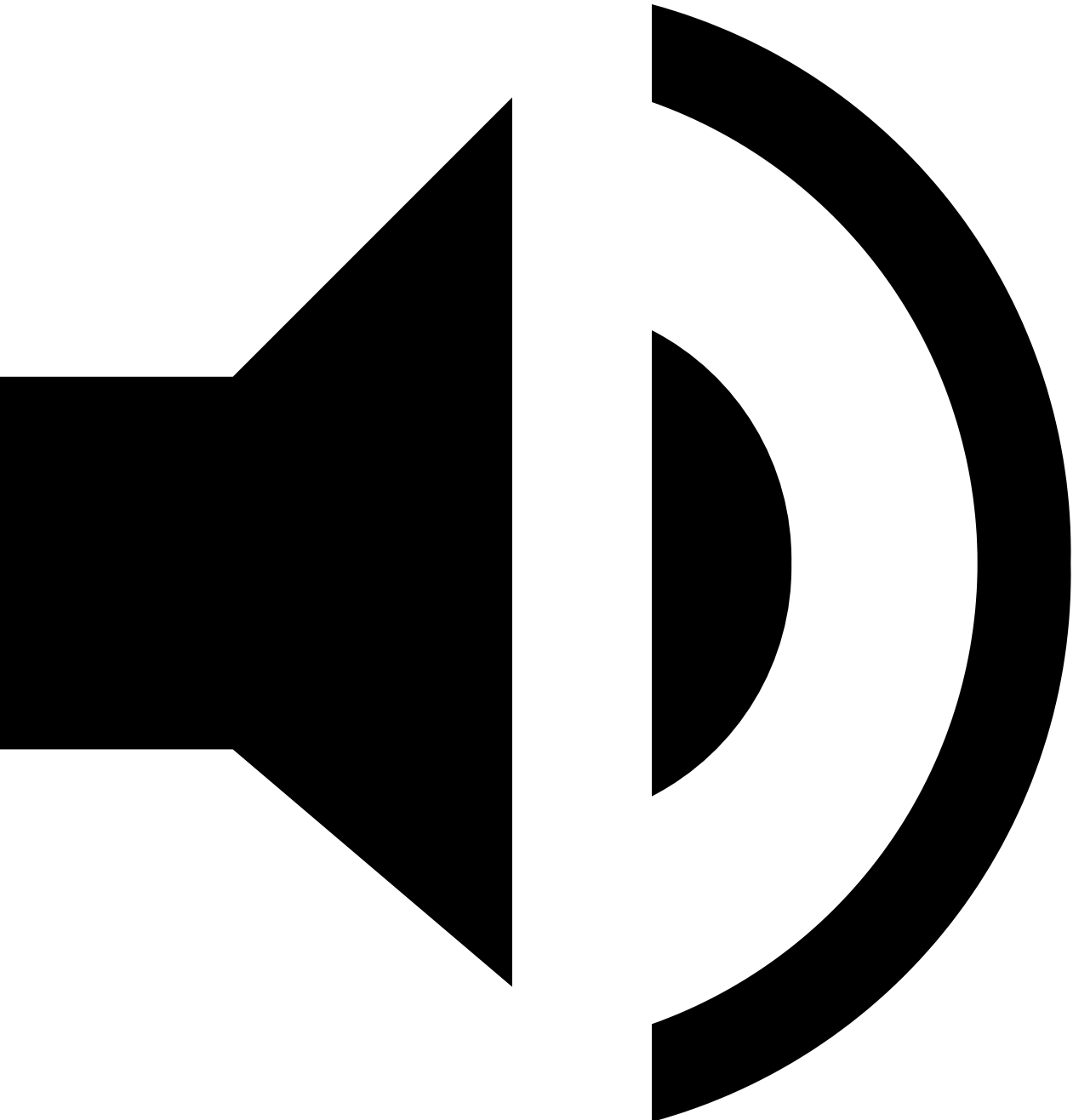
Palo Alto-founded Cooley is representing Jenner & Block in its legal challenge to a Trump executive order that restricted Jenner's access to government officials and threatened its federal contracting work. A federal judge in May [overturned](#) Trump's order, calling it an unconstitutional act of retaliation for Jenner's past cases and its employment of a prosecutor who investigated ties between Trump's 2016 campaign and Russia.

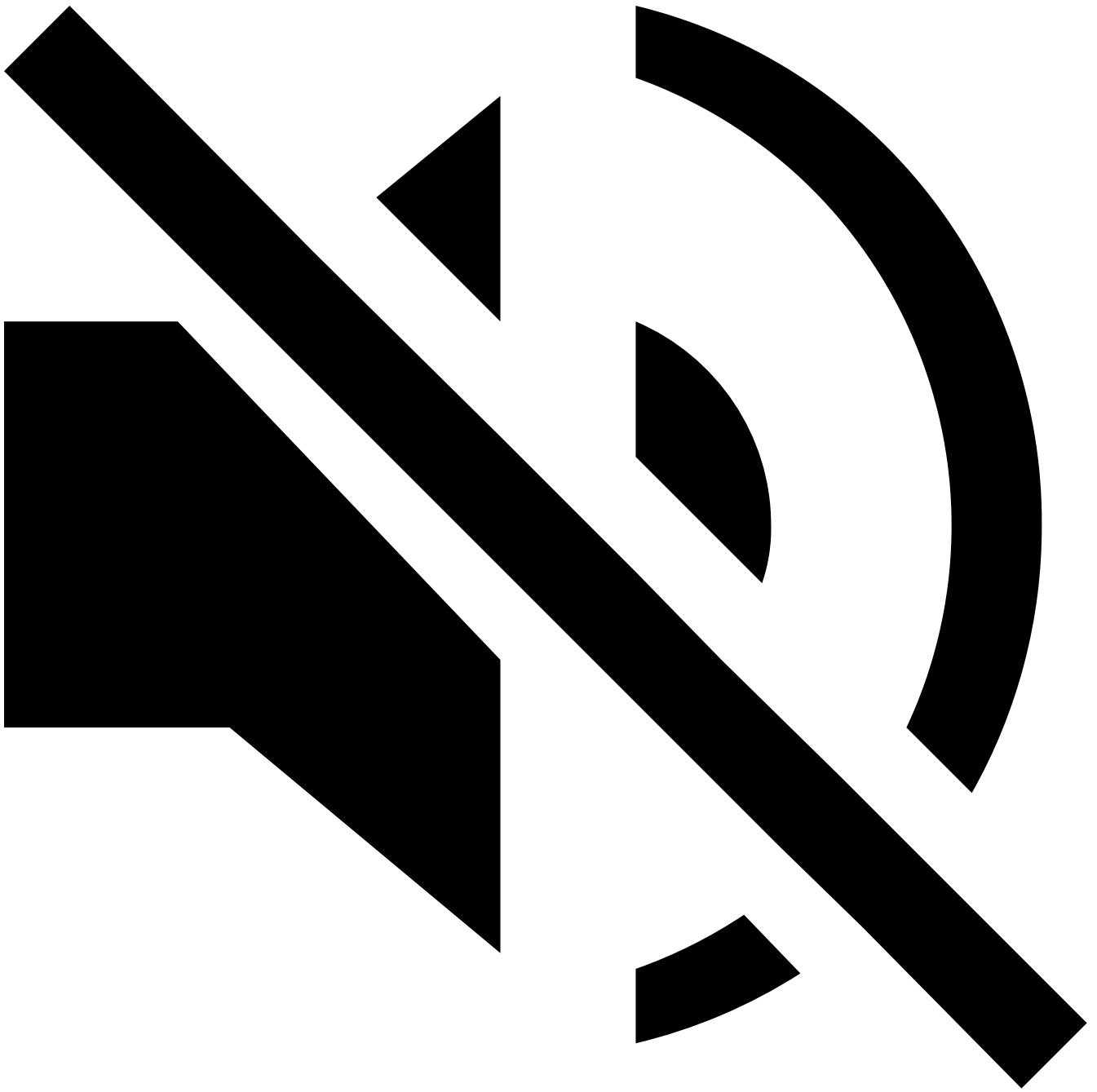


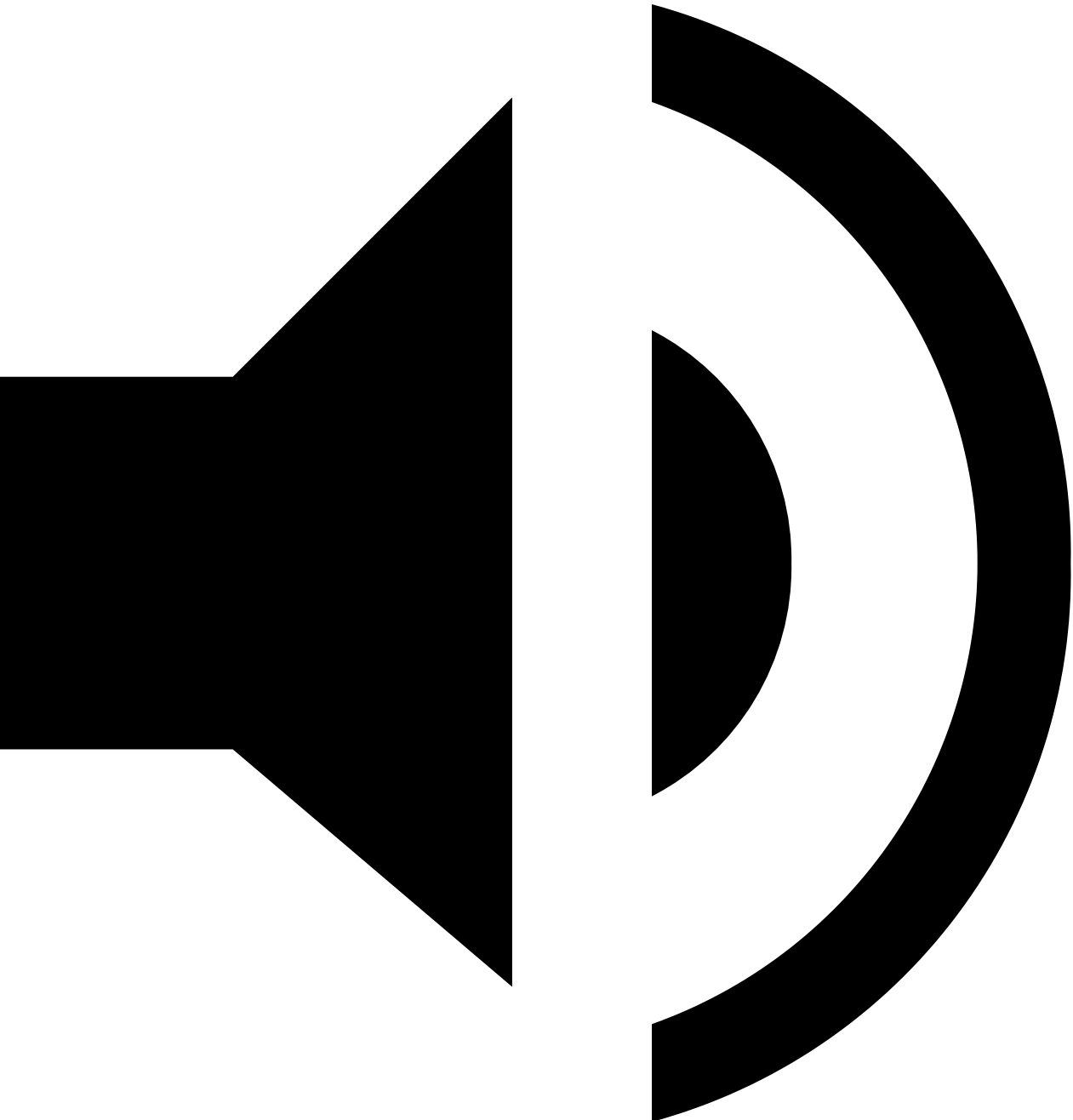
1/100:11Kanye West arrives at Sean 'Diddy' Combs trial

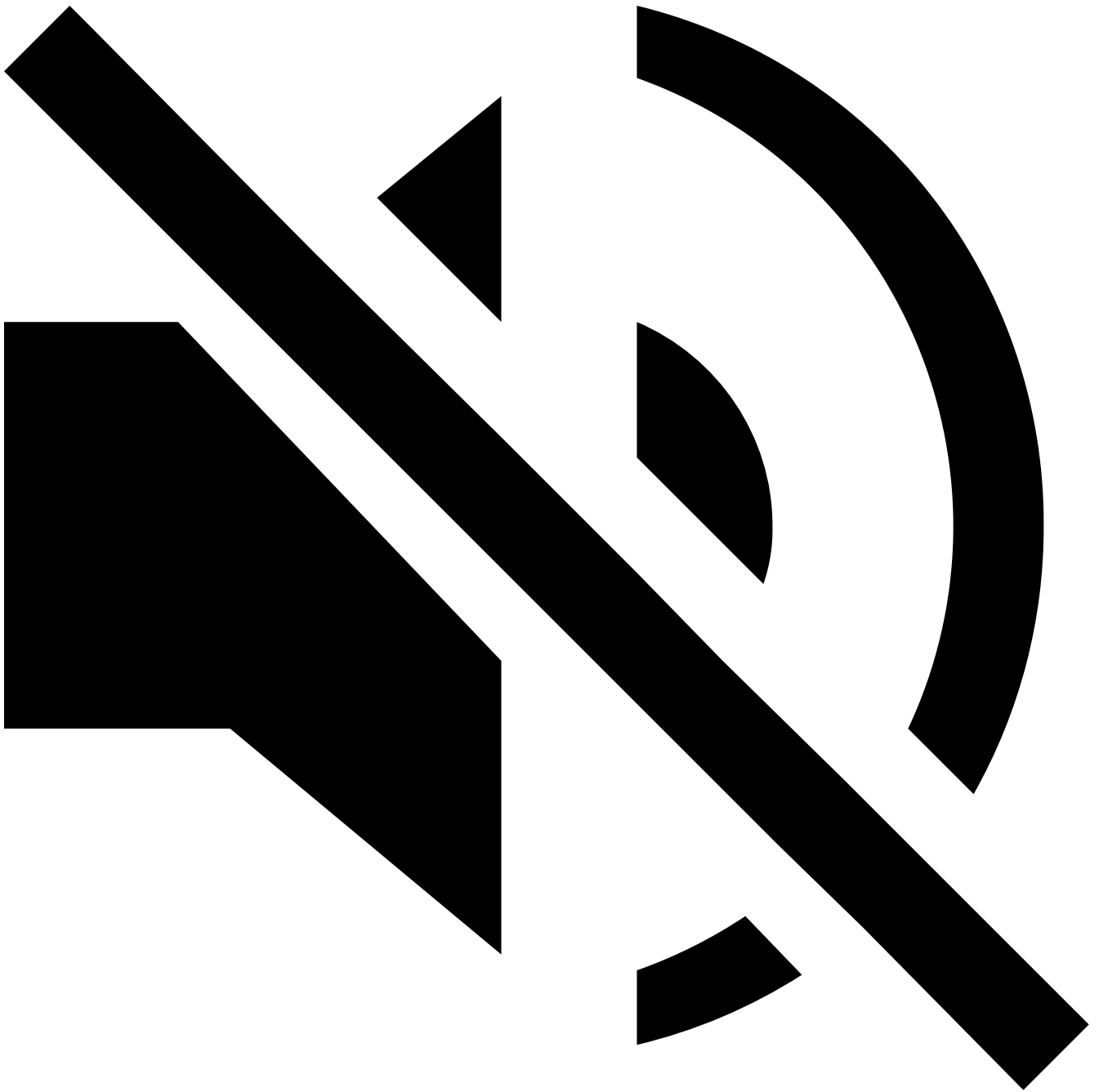


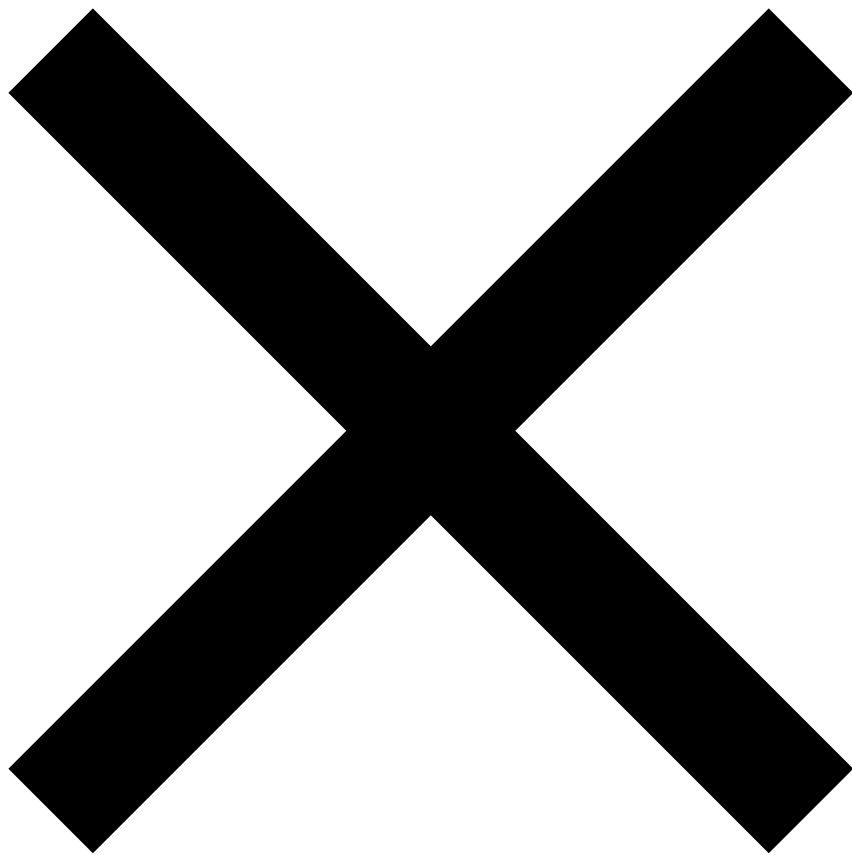












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Cooley CEO Rachel Proffitt in a statement said the firm is "thrilled to welcome this esteemed group of Bay Area leaders and litigators."

Willkie Farr in its deal with Trump agreed to provide free legal services worth \$100 million to mutually agreed-upon projects with the administration and had pledged not to engage in illegal diversity-related employment practices. Eight other large firms have reached similar agreements with the White House. Willkie's leadership said in an internal email seen by Reuters in April that the deal prevented Trump from signing an executive order that could have imperiled the firm and its clients, though it had acknowledged dissent about the decision.

The first firm to settle with Trump, Paul Weiss, has seen at least eight partners leave since its agreement in March. Since the end of May, seven partners have [left](#) the firm to join a new firm, Dunn Isaacson Rhee, co-founded by former Paul Weiss partner Karen Dunn.

The new firm has taken over from Paul Weiss in at least one case – an antitrust lawsuit in Nevada in which some of the former Paul Weiss lawyers are representing the Ultimate Fighting Championship, according to court documents filed this week. A Paul Weiss spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Dunn Isaacson firm is now also representing Google and Qualcomm in antitrust litigation, though Paul Weiss remains involved in those cases.

Reporting by Sara Merken. Additional reporting by Mike Scarcella.

