

# Robust Midwest Markets Fuel Strategic Expansion

*Jones Day's new Minneapolis office set to service local and global clients*

*Partner-in-charge Brian West Easley discusses the services available at Jones Day's new Minneapolis location, previewing the firm's expectations for the office and the region as a whole. His remarks have been edited for length and style.*

**MCC:** Tell us about your background and your practice.

**Easley:** I've been with the firm for 21 years. My practice is labor and employment, although I focus primarily on traditional labor issues as they relate to business restructuring combinations. I do a lot of work in the M&A space and in bankruptcy proceedings, as well as traditional collective bargaining across a multitude of industries.

**MCC:** Why did Jones Day open an office in Minneapolis?

**Easley:** A number of reasons. The first was the strength of the legal community here. There's a high level of legal talent, and the area has a very educated population. Also, Minneapolis-St. Paul is a significant business center with a diversified economy and an expanding business community. From the standpoint of the firm's overall national practice, Minneapolis was a place where it made sense to be. We have existing relationships with a number of important Minnesota-based clients. By opening an office here, we are closer to companies that we already represent and that we've been servicing from other offices, Chicago and elsewhere. Last, in terms of the competition, few global law firms have a significant presence in Minneapolis, so there was an opportunity for a firm of our size and scope to do well in this legal community.

We're very happy to be here in Minnesota. We plan to grow and be part of the legal community. We couldn't be more enthusiastic about what we're going to accomplish here.

**MCC:** What is the current make up and scope of the office?

**Easley:** We have six partners and six associates in Minneapolis who primarily cover three practice groups: traditional litigation, which we call business and tort litigation; mergers and acquisitions; and labor and employment. But we are continuing to diversify our practice offerings, and we expect that growth to continue.

**MCC:** Where do you see the office over the next two to five years?

**Easley:** We're going to continue to have robust growth as we start to fill out our practice profile. We're going to add lawyers, either internally or externally, to fill out certain practice areas. For example, we'd like to have an IP practice, a real estate practice, and a financial services practice. We'll be looking for the right talent to fill those needs as we grow. It will be a process, but I would say in the next two to five years, we expect to be a diverse and full-service office similar to our sister offices in other cities.

**MCC:** With offices in Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit and now Minneapolis, Jones Day is especially strong in the Midwest. Are there advantages that Jones Day has to offer specifically in the Midwest?

**Easley:** We're very optimistic about the economy in the Midwest, particularly around the Great Lakes. While other law firms seem to be retrenching from smaller markets and focusing primarily on the big money centers, such as New York or Washington D.C., we believe that the Midwest continues to be a significant economic engine for the United States. We also believe that great Midwestern companies have the same complexity of legal needs that the companies in New York and Washington do.

We can offer them the same quality of legal services locally. We can offer a value proposition for our clients that a lot of our competitors who are more focused on the big money centers cannot.

**MCC:** Can you elaborate on Jones Day's model for servicing clients as One Firm Worldwide, especially in the context of a new and growing office? How will Minnesota clients benefit from the firm's platform?

**Easley:** Clients benefit in two ways. First, because we have existing client relationships here, our plan is to strengthen those relationships. As a small and growing office, we obviously do not meet all the needs of major Fortune 500 companies that are based here. But we can provide a point of access or gateway for these companies to the Jones Day global platform because our firm operates as a seamless, integrated institution. There are no barriers, compensation or otherwise, to discourage our lawyers from getting other offices involved. We can access talent anywhere throughout Jones Day to get whatever skill set we need to bring to bear on the client's problems. In many cases, we do that by staffing across offices. Here in Minneapolis, we may have a relationship with a Minneapolis-based client, but we provide them with a point of contact to get them legal services throughout the world. That gives us an ability to serve the clients in a way that many of the local firms do not.

Conversely, we have a lot of relationships with clients all over the world. Some of those clients are interested in doing business in Minnesota. We can also provide support for other clients outside Minnesota with respect to their legal needs that might be local. There's a symbiotic relationship between the office and the law firm in which we support our other offices on matters that are local to Minnesota. We also provide a point of contact to our Minnesota-based clients who might have legal needs elsewhere throughout the world.

**MCC:** What are the principle industries driving in the Twin Cities economy? Where do you see growth opportunities?

**Easley:** The Minnesota economy is a tremendous and an important economic center in the Midwest. The gross municipal product in Minneapolis is \$235 billion, which ranks thirteenth in the United States. There are 16 Fortune 500 companies based in Minnesota, which is second in Fortune 500 companies per 1 million people. It's home to some of the largest private companies in the United States. We think that the Minnesota economy is robust and growing. We think it's going to continue to grow, and we plan to grow with it.

**MCC:** Our readers may recall both the firm's role in the city of the Detroit's historic Chapter 9 reorganization as well as your role on the team. How is Detroit doing two years after its plan of adjustment was confirmed? Is there anything that stands out about that work as an example for iconic US cities and their rebirth?

**Easley:** The main issue for Detroit is that its people need to believe that the City can come back from the brink. It was a city really crippled by economic problems and by political dysfunction. Security was a big issue, and many public services had broken down. If you look back to the situation before the bankruptcy plan of adjustment, obviously a lot has been done to shore up the finances of Detroit and to improve those public services. What we started to see, although we're just at the front end of this, is people starting to come back to Detroit to do business. People are investing in the city.

It's not enough just to shore up the finances of the government. Private industry really needs to come back, and the public needs to come back and live and shop and invest in Detroit. You're starting to see that. There is a rebirth of a lot of industries, service industries in particular. It's probably going to take a decade or maybe longer to see the long-term results in terms of the turnaround of the city, but I'm very optimistic, given the new leadership in the city and given what was accomplished during the bankruptcy, that Detroit is on the road to recovery and will be a great US city again soon.



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