



Byron Myers is “incredibly responsive and knowledgeable” in his role as legal counsel, according to Indiana Chamber President and CEO Kevin Brinegar.

BYRON MYERS

Volunteer of the Year

By Charlee Beasor

Though Byron Myers says it might sound “trite,” he points to his parents when asked about his mentors in life.

Raised in a hard-working farm family in Brazil, Indiana, Myers explains that his parents always encouraged him to continue his education beyond high school.

“They were a farm family, kind of understated, hard working and kind of resilient. My dad was a believer, and my mother, that if you work hard, you’ll get ahead and if you don’t, you won’t. They were always encouraging me to get an education beyond high school. They were both high school graduates,” he reminisces.

“‘A young man needs an education’ was the way they always said it.”

Myers heeded his parents’ advice and continued his education well beyond high school. He graduated from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology (then called Rose Polytechnic Institute, Myers notes) with an engineering degree and spent seven years in that field, and as a commercial pilot, before going to law school.

Today, Myers is preparing to close out a distinguished career with Ice Miller LLP in Indianapolis. A labor and employment law

attorney, he has been with the firm for 38 years and plans to retire at the end of 2016.

Clarity is key

Looking ahead to his retirement, Myers admits that he doesn’t have any grand plans – even though that’s everyone’s first question for him. A self-professed “gearhead,” he quips that he’ll probably be found somewhere on his motorcycle.

Reflecting on his legal career, Myers doesn’t point to one case that stands out as the most significant.

“People ask me, ‘What’s the most important case you’ve ever handled?’ Important to who? I’ve handled some cases I’ve considered routine, run of the mill. But to my client, that was probably a big deal; much more than I thought it was,” he offers.

When Myers meets with clients to

evaluate policies and procedures, he offers guidance on how to interpret employment laws. One of the greatest challenges in his specialty, however, is unclear statutes or rules.

“Many times as lawyers, we get asked by a client, ‘Can I do this or do I have to do that?’ Sometimes the answer is yes or no, because it’s clear. Other times, we don’t really know. The statute is not clear enough to say, ‘This is what it means,’” he asserts.

“That’s why, when I’m assisting a drafting, I want to make it as clear as possible and cover as many situations as possible. You can never think of everything that might come up, but it’s good for laws to be as clear – both for businesses who operate with them and individuals that have to operate within them; it’s easier to know what the rules are.”

Invaluable legal guidance

Myers has served on the Indiana Chamber’s board of directors and executive committee, as well as being legal counsel for the organization, since 2010. He was and continues to be a longtime member of several policy committees.

He gives a variety of reasons for his extensive involvement with the Chamber – the statewide impact the Chamber makes, as well as his belief that a healthy business environment benefits everyone.

“First and foremost, I believe in the Chamber’s mission. The Chamber’s mission ... is to focus on the business conditions for the state of Indiana. The entire state. What is good for business is good for everyone. If business is thriving, there’s employment opportunities and taxes and healthy opportunities and a healthy state,” Myers exclaims.

“A good business environment is important to the state of Indiana – not just the companies, but also the people. That’s a primary thing in my mind. I do like the fact that it’s a statewide organization, not just here where I live. I come from a rural part of the state and I know how badly they need someone like the Chamber thinking of them and paying attention to their needs as well.”

Indiana Chamber President and CEO Kevin Brinegar considers Myers a “consummate professional.”

“He is always incredibly poised, always cool, calm and collected. You never see Byron get upset or raise his voice or get flustered in any way,” Brinegar states. “He’s just incredibly thoughtful on everything I’ve ever discussed with him, and he asks great questions too.”

That professionalism has been a key for some of the hot-button legislative issues Myers has assisted with over the past several years, including the right-to-work battle in 2012 and, most recently, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Myers testified



A self-described “gearhead,” Myers plans to spend more time on his motorcycle after retiring from Ice Miller at the end of 2016.

against RFRA on behalf of the Indiana Chamber due to a provision that would have subjected Hoosier employers to unnecessary lawsuits.

Problems from the outset

Myers was asked to take a critical look at the RFRA language early in the legislative process. He was immediately aware of the trouble the legislation could pose for employers throughout the state.

“There was a serious problem with it from an employment law standpoint,” he recalls. “Sometimes people don’t fully appreciate how something might be interpreted. I saw how it really could (lead to) private lawsuits, religious discrimination and employment, and we

already have laws applying to that. There was a whole host of problems.”

Brinegar adds, “That legislation, as it was initially introduced, included a new right of action against employers, a new reason to sue employers. Byron helped us draft an amendment to remove that language.

“Later, we got into the discussion and debate about what became known as the RFRA fix. He helped us evaluate and draft language to propose to legislative leaders and the Governor’s office, so it could not be used as a basis to discriminate.”

Myers stresses that business impact was top of mind.

“There are really strong feelings about it on both sides, but again, those were more the philosophical or political issues. We were trying to stay focused on the effect on employers,” he explains.

Spreading the volunteering love

Myers is involved with a number of other non-profit organizations and other worthy causes, including the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis, the FBI Citizens Academy-Indiana Chapter, the Indiana Federal Community Defenders and more.

“There are so many good volunteers for these organizations. People that spend a lot of time and effort. I’m not unique in that regard. It’s a pleasure to work with the staffs of these organizations and the other volunteers. There are a lot of smart people out there and I want to learn from them,” he declares.

Noting some of the previous Indiana Chamber Volunteer of the Year honorees, Myers terms his selection “an honor and a privilege.”

... “To be singled out is really an honor. I want to say that it’s the whole group working together – that is what achieves the results.”

RESOURCE: Byron Myers, Ice Miller, at www.icemiller.com

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