



# LEGAL ACCLAIM

## Consummate Firm, Leader

By Rebecca Patrick

This May, Ogletree Deakins celebrates 25 years of being in Indianapolis.

In 2000, it marked the 12th office for the growing law firm. Today, it's one of about 60 locations that dot 32 states, plus Canada, Mexico and Europe.

"(At the time), it was one of the first – if not the first – boutique law firms in the city" specializing in a specific area of practice, relays Bonnie Martin, the office managing partner.

Ogletree Deakins' niche is in labor and employment law.

Around 43 attorneys and 61 total employees call the Indianapolis office their professional home – up from nine lawyers in the beginning. Founding partners Charles Baldwin, Kim Ebert, Todd Kaiser and Kenneth Siepman remain.

Martin came on board at Ogletree Deakins Indianapolis in 2004 and in 2022 became the office's second female leader. She has two decades of experience representing and defending employers.

### Practice makes perfect

"The vision initially of the firm was that it would have all of these additional resources, a lot more depth in the nuances of employment law, far beyond just what a handful of people could have on their own," Martin says.

"I think that has certainly been realized. Having the bench strength of a now global law firm really does come into play. ... Labor law has become so much more complex as everyone knows. But even within our office, we have developed subject matter expertise

among many of our attorneys and several of them lead practice groups for the firm."

ESG (environmental, social and governance), employee benefits and executive compensation, and arbitration and alternative dispute resolution are three of these practices.

And more are being developed.

"We have several of our associates who are building their own subject matter expertise in the areas that the firm services, like for instance within background checks and workplace investigations," Martin remarks. "That's exciting to see too because the newer attorneys are catching that vision and understanding just how broad employment law is and how important it is to figure out where you can really get deep in a topic."

In addition to dealing with a gamut of more traditional employment law inquiries such as FMLA compliance or harassment, Martin herself has increased the amount of workplace investigations she's done for clients over the last 10 years.

"We will get involved if an investigation is needed of a high level executive – someone in the legal team, someone in the human resources team – because those kinds of investigations are more sensitive. Sometimes the in-house folks who would normally do an investigation feel like that's not a comfortable spot to be in," she conveys.

### Role model

Martin's colleagues and those who benefit from her expertise – including the Indiana Chamber, which named her a recent volunteer of the year – point to her thoughtful and

meticulous nature.

A mother of five, whose ages range from 21 to 28 and includes three daughters, she is cognizant of setting a good example.

"It definitely makes you realize that people are watching you all the time. You realize that with your kids early on and how they mimic you. And as they get older, realizing that they're not just watching how I do my day-to-day life, but they're looking at how I deal with balancing my time and how I deal with difficult individuals or difficult situations, and how much grace do I bring or not," Martin reflects.

"I think about that. I think about what they are seeing and who do I want them to see as opposed to something that I would regret. That awareness carries over into the workplace because everyone's watching their coworkers to see how they handle things. And that's important to me."

Looking back on her journey, Martin imparts another lesson learned.

"I wish I had realized earlier that everyone is kind of figuring things out a little bit at a time. It wasn't just me," she smiles. "That everyone – regardless of whether they're a judge, a senior partner or your client who is at a high level in their organization – is really still trying to figure out how to do their job better, how to do their job well."

"Also, I think people are looking for partners in that process. I wish I had understood all that better. I think it would've taken some of the pressure off ... not the good pressure, but the bad pressure."

### Volunteer spirit

Outside of the work she does with the Indiana Chamber – where she chairs the organization's employment law policy committee, among her activities – Martin is very involved with her church. She also points to the motivation received at work.

"I see the giving back opportunity so vividly within my office managing shareholder role ... that's right in front of me and realizing that what I'm doing, the efforts that I'm making and the steps that I'm taking, are impacting the next generation of attorneys. It's impacting the legacy of our office and the firm. So, that is something that I take very seriously during this season," Martin states.

As a firm, Ogletree Deakins is committed to providing its share of free services.

"Whether that's serving on one of the pro bono panels for the southern district of Indiana's court system or working with a particular cause, Ogletree has a structured way for attorneys to be involved and even sometimes receive billable hour credit for that purpose, which is significant and certainly drives



Over the years – whether it centers on people, pets or the general community – Ogletree Deakins in Indianapolis has committed time to various charitable events and causes.

participation in pro bono (efforts). That underscores how important it is for the firm,” Martin offers.

Employees giving time to an animal shelter or an organization that helps individuals in need, along with holding traditional food and clothing drives, are examples of some of the community service the company encourages.

### ‘Exciting time’

In the last few years, Ogletree Deakins has leaned into online resources. Martin says the flagship product is its client portal.

“Our clients have the ability to use this resource, which puts at their fingertips some of the key multi-state issues. With premium subscriptions, they can get sample policies, documents, employee letters and different

types of communications.

“I think the firm is doing a great job of trying to think ahead of what people are needing and wanting. And also (responding to) the questions that we’re getting over and over again.”

With so much happening on the federal scene with presidential executive orders, rulemaking and more, Ogletree has a task force within the firm to follow the action of what is enforceable or stayed by the court, as well as keeping apprised of any agency definitions to the terms within the executive orders.

Stresses Martin, “The current climate and what we expect to continue just really underscores the value of the labor employment law firm because I think as things change, the demand for what we do is only going to increase.

“It’s an exciting time to be with the Ogletree. ... There is a definite push to be just the best labor and employment firm out there.”

Martin points to Ogletree’s role in creating a positive environment – one that pushes collegiality and treating each other well.

“The respect of teamwork, respect for our colleagues; those are part of our client pledge, part of our mission statement internally. And it’s just an exciting time to be doing what I do.”

**RESOURCE:** Bonnie Martin, Ogletree Deakins, at [www.ogletree.com/locations/indianapolis](http://www.ogletree.com/locations/indianapolis)

