

Legal Roundup: Miller Canfield Consulting LLC is launched

By: Thomas Franz ■ in News Stories ○ August 14, 2017

Miller Canfield announced that it has hired former Michigan Economic Development Corporation CEO Steve Arwood to lead Miller Canfield Consulting LLC.

Arwood brings more than 30 years of experience in creating private-public sector partnerships, which will be the focus of the new consulting arm of Miller Canfield.



“While I’ve dealt with a lot of lawyers who are economic developers over my life in the state, I’ve dealt with more non-lawyer economic development professionals that kind of bring a wider range of understanding on how these partnerships come together,” Arwood said.

Arwood was the CEO of the MDEC from January 2015 until June 2017. Prior to that, he was director of the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs from 2012 to 2015.

He’s also served as the director of programs and policy for the House of Representatives and was deputy director of the Michigan Jobs Commission.

Miller Canfield’s recent notable public-private partnership projects have included Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, expansion of Cobo Center and the development of legal framework for the Gordie Howe Bridge.

“Miller Canfield has a long history of working with private companies and the public sector in partnerships to plan, fund and build impactful projects,” said Miller Canfield CEO Michael McGee in a press release. “We saw an opportunity to provide additional advisory and strategy expertise alongside Miller Canfield’s legal services, adding significant value to our clients’ projects.”

Arwood echoed McGee’s sentiments about the consulting group being one more way in which a law firm can work for clients.

“I think there are certainly things professionals can bring to a law firm that are not typical or traditional legal services. It’s all about client service, how do we develop services for clients that are valuable, timely and impactful,” Arwood said. “I think it’s an additive to high-quality legal services. I know other firms are doing some of this. I think this is kind of the first step for Miller to do this and I’m thrilled to be leading it.”

Based in Detroit, Arwood expressed excitement about working in a city that has seen plenty of private-public partnerships form over the past few years as the city as emerged from bankruptcy.

“To look at what’s happened over the last six or seven years, in terms of the growth of our economy and the rebounding of Detroit, and by viewing it from my side as a senior public official and doing what I could to help that, it’s been nothing short of amazing,” Arwood said.

Howard & Howard forms cannabis group

Royal Oak-based firm Howard & Howard announced that it has formed a Cannabis Industry Group.

The group will provide many services to clients operating in the evolving legal, medical and adult use cannabis industry.

Howard & Howard attorney Alexander M. Leonowicz said he expressed interest to firm CEO Mark Davis, who advised him to see how many of the firm’s attorneys were already involved in the industry across the country.

Leonowicz said the firm already has about 15 attorneys working in the cannabis space in Michigan, Illinois, Nevada and California.

“Everyone had a different specialty, whether it was real estate or intellectual property or helping with the actual licensing,” Leonowicz said.

Leonowicz said that the firm’s West Coast attorneys will enable the Midwest branches of the firm to have a leg up in advising clients.

“The nice thing about having the West Coast presence is we can take those ideas and business models and translate that back over to states in the Midwest, which are a few years behind the West Coast,” Leonowicz said. “It’s nice to have their experience and be able to call on them to see how they’re tackling certain issues.

“I think in this industry, experience is going to be key. In an area that’s so brand-new with lots of gray area, those individuals who have worked in this space already will give us a leg up in terms of working with clients in Michigan.”

Leonowicz said Michigan is uniquely positioned for the cannabis industry because of its nearly 215,000 cannabis cardholders. By comparison, Leonowicz said Colorado has about 180,000, and Illinois has about 19,000.

“Michigan is uniquely positioned to be one of the biggest states in the cannabis market. It’s the right time and right place,” Leonowicz said.

If you would like to comment on this story, email Thomas Franz at tfranz@mi.lawyersweekly.com.

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