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‘One Thing Led to Another’ in Distinguished Legal Career

Stephanie Laborde’s Diverse Practice Includes Defense Litigation, Government Relations and Health Law



Jill Layne/Layne Photography

Stephanie Laborde, managing partner of Milling Benson Woodward’s Baton Rouge office and chair of the firm’s Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs Department, has served at the highest levels of state government. Her government expertise carried over into her legal career, where she has served as general counsel to several state and quasi state agencies. This depth and breadth of knowledge on both sides of state government are a boon for many clients.

“I know how things are done, whom to call and where the problems tend to be,” she explains. “I can take clients by the hand and help them wend their way through a complex labyrinth of conflicting instructions and requirements, problems and holdups.”

Looking back on her more than 30-year career, Laborde recalls that “one thing led to the next in a very orderly way.” Her experience as general counsel to the Patient’s Compensation Fund Oversight Board led to defense work in the medical malpractice area. Her medical malpractice litigation has led, in turn, to additional work on behalf of health care providers. For instance, she currently serves as general counsel to the Community Hospital Coalition, a group of 10 community hospitals, and has advised the Coalition on a wide range of issues.

Laborde’s Eclectic Case Mix Complements Milling’s Practice Range

Like most courtroom attorneys in Louisiana, Laborde and others at her firm continue to be involved in Hurricane Katrina-related litigation. For instance, in a case benefiting from her experience in all three areas of law, she is currently representing the Patient’s Compensation Fund in complex litigation related to the deaths of 35 residents of St. Rita’s Nursing Home in Chalmette, Louisiana, in the hurricane’s aftermath.

About Milling Benson Woodward, L.L.P.

Founded in 1896, Milling Benson Woodward is known for its successful defense litigation practice, and represents clients throughout Louisiana and the Gulf Coast and other jurisdictions. “We are especially well suited to handle complex corporate litigation including mass tort, environmental contamination and other incidents that affect lots of people,” Laborde says. The firm has been involved in many cases involving hundreds of plaintiffs and dozens of defendants, she notes.

The firm’s attorneys have experience in many industries, including banking and finance, oil and gas, railroads, shipping and other transportation companies, real estate and landowner interests, public utilities, health care providers, professional licensure boards, insurance, telecommunications, public finance, hotels, retailers, wholesalers, food processors, business and personal service companies, and manufacturers.

Stephanie Laborde is managing partner of Milling Benson Woodward’s Baton Rouge office, chair of the firm’s Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs Department, and a member of its Management Committee. In 1984, she became the youngest Commissioner of Administration in Louisiana’s history; this is the highest appointed position in Louisiana state government, responsible for its operations and finances. She has also served as the Chief of Staff of the Governor’s Office. She has since served as general counsel to several state and quasi state agencies, including the Patient’s Compensation Fund, the Licensing Board for Contractors and the Louisiana Insurance Guaranty Association.

Laborde’s practice areas complement the firm’s wide range of experience and knowledge required for a general business law practice. “In addition to the ability to provide expert advice and counsel to businesses in virtually every sector of the economy, our litigation team is second to none,” Laborde says. She cites as examples of the firm’s successful litigation history its representation of the Kansas City Southern Railway in a class action suit based on the explosion of a railroad tank car at the Gaylord Chemical Plant in Bogalusa, Louisiana; the representation of Kirby Inland Marine in a class action suit filed as a result of a barge leak on the Mississippi River; and the defense of several suits involving normally occurring radioactive material (NORM) contamination. One recent and interesting success involved the use of forensic evidence to prove that a death was a suicide, and therefore excluded from accidental death benefits, on behalf of the Life Insurance Company of North America and Exide Corporation.

“Milling Benson Woodward is able to provide business clients with the full spectrum of legal advice and representation they may require,” Laborde says. “Whatever your need, we have the legal resources and talent to help.”

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