

## FIRM PHILOSOPHY

Zukowski Law Offices is committed to furnishing affordable experienced, aggressive, innovative high quality legal representation. We believe that bigger isn't necessarily better. Our attention to detail and thoroughness has earned us a statewide reputation for excellence. **Last year we assisted 43 School Districts throughout Illinois with legal issues.** The firm engages in a comprehensive and technical approach generally associated with larger firms.

The firm distinguishes itself from larger specialized law firms by having a local presence in north central Illinois. This allows us to build client relationships, which are characterized by flexibility, responsiveness, and continuity; qualities that are the strength of a focused smaller firm. The 45 years of collective experience of our attorneys is our greatest resource.

## EDUCATION OVERVIEW

We represent numerous School Districts in Northern Illinois. Those Districts are at all levels of education. We have experience in virtually all areas of Education Law. This includes, but is not limited to:

Collective Bargaining	Bond Issues
Contracts	Election Issues
Employee Discipline	Mediation/Arbitration
Policy Drafting	Public Relations
Boundary Changes	Staff Development
Student Discipline	Unfair Labor Practices
Special Education	Vocational Education
Tax Increment Financing	Impact Fees
Enterprise Zones	Labor Strikes
Sales Tax Agreement	Transition Fees
Pensions	Tax Objections
Litigation	Infectious Disease
Administrative Hearings	Financial Projections
Administrative Training	Bid Specifications
Medical Leave Act	Open Meetings Act
FOIA	Grievances
Levy Preparation	Real Estate Purchase/Sale
Budget Preparation	Energy Contracts
Foundation Establishment	Scholarship Agreements
Drug Testing	Free Speech
Search/Seizure	Employee Benefits

## PROGRAMS

We have developed a number of programs which are rare, even among school law firms.

**Superintendent training.** We have hosted an intensive two-day workshop every fall and spring,

covering the most common administrative problem areas. Topics include, among others: *Budget/Levy Construction, Financial Projections, Public Relations, TIF/Enterprise Zones, Remediation and Collective Bargaining.* We provide a binder with over 150 pages of information. Numerous Superintendents from across the northern half of Illinois have attended these programs.

**Mentoring.** School administrators have few places to turn for information on a wide array of every day issues. Who do they turn to? We developed a program with a recently retired school superintendent to assist administrators facing new or novel situations. We meet one on one with administrators on topics they select. These meetings are normally an hour long over several months. This program is especially helpful to new Superintendents.

**School District Forum.** For the last 15 years every fall and spring we host a half day meeting on current problems facing school districts in Northern Illinois. Attendance is open to School Administrators. It is free for retainer clients, but individuals from other districts may attend for a nominal fee. Recent topics include: 1) *reducing costs in special education hearings,* 2) *employer right to search employees,* 3) *trends in collective bargaining,* and 4) *new developments in student discipline.* Written materials accompany each topic. Numerous districts attend these programs regularly.

**Financial Projections.** We have acquired a statewide reputation for knowledge as to the impact of economic development on schools. We can evaluate the impact of a project on school enrollment, the cost to educate children, the cost of new construction, the impact on local EAV, and the impact on state aid. Additionally, we have worked on a number of projects in the following areas:

**Enterprise Zones.** We have evaluated the statutes authorizing such proposals and creative alternatives to minimize the impact on schools.

**Tax Increment Financing.** We have negotiated numerous Intergovernmental Agreements minimizing the impact on schools.

**Fees.** Residential subdivisions have caused financial problems for many schools. We have negotiated a number of Intergovernmental Agreements in this regard.

**Tort Fund.** Over the years we have consulted with a large number of districts regarding permissible, as well as inappropriate uses of this revenue source.

**Tax Objections.** The trend of commercial and industrial taxpayers to seek a reduction of their real estate taxes can have a dramatic affect on a school. We have defended numerous districts minimizing any adverse financial effect.

**Sales Tax Agreements.** Municipalities have some flexibility in sharing sales tax revenue with schools. We have worked with several school districts in attempting to achieve agreements in this expanding area.

## COSTS

Now, more than ever, schools are careful with spending their legal dollar. We have a great answer for this concern.

**Fees.** Most projects are handled on an hourly basis, although occasionally do work on a fixed fee basis. Either way, our hourly rates can be as much as **40%** less than large firms specializing in school law.

**Retainer Arrangement.** Many districts wishing even more savings prefer this arrangement. For a fixed monthly fee we: **1)** provide a 10% discount for all work not covered by the retainer, **2)** return all routine telephone calls from the superintendent without charge, and **3)** attend one free board meeting a year. Last year the average monthly retainer cost was approximately \$50. At the same time, the average value of services provided without charge to retainer clients was approximately \$255 per month. This represents an average annual district **savings** of more than **\$2,400!**

## FIRM PARTNERS

**Walter J. Zukowski** founded the Zukowski Law Offices in 1988, after six years as an attorney with another firm. Prior to that he was a law clerk to the Illinois Supreme Court. During the course of his career, Mr. Zukowski has litigated cases in state and federal courts. He has represented management in numerous types of actions.



Mr. Zukowski is a summa cum laude graduate from the University of Illinois - at Springfield, with a BA in Economics. He has a Juris Doctorate and Masters Degree in Business Administration, with

honors, from the University of Notre Dame. Mr. Zukowski has done post-graduate work at the London School of Economics. He has also done post-graduate work in Financial Planning.

Mr. Zukowski is the former Chairman of the Illinois State Bar Association Section Council on Education Law. He is a frequent lecturer, and has had several articles published. Mr. Zukowski is also a former Chairman of the Illinois Community College Attorneys Association. He is also a member of the National Council of School Attorneys. Mr. Zukowski is listed in "Who's Who In American Law".



**James S. Peters** has been an attorney with the Zukowski Law Offices of Peru, Illinois, since 1994. Jim earned his law degree from DePaul University in 1992. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Notre Dame

in 1989.

Jim is a former member of the Illinois State Bar Association Section Council on Education Law. He is a member of the Illinois Council of School Attorneys. He is also a member of the LaSalle County Bar Association. Jim serves on the Board of Directors of several local civic organizations, including the Illinois Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross, Peru, Illinois. Jim's primary areas of legal practice include public taxing body representation, estate planning and administration, corporate representation, and intellectual property law.

## CONCLUSION

Some districts have local counsel with whom they have a long standing relationship, but need assistance on occasional specialized projects. Other districts have relationships with specialty firms, but don't want to pay large fees for routine matters. We understand the needs of local districts. We understand many districts are experiencing tough financial times. We go to great lengths to tailor our services to the needs of each client.

If you are considering changing counsel for financial reasons, we ask that you **please consider us**. If you are considering changing counsel for quality reasons, we ask that you **call us**. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you.

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# Zukowski Law Offices

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## EDUCATION FIRM BROCHURE



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