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LEADERS IN THE LAW

Raymond J. Sterling

Sterling Attorneys at Law, P.C., Farmington Hills

Specialties: Employment and commercial law counseling and litigation

Education: University of Michigan Law School (1982)

Employment law attorney Raymond J. Sterling's nickname is "relentless," and that telling moniker has been earning him business from a surprising sector of the populace: his former opponents.

"Firms who have faced us have said we've worked harder than any other firm they've faced in court," he said. "A major source of our clients come from referrals from firms we've argued against."

After breaking off to form his own firm three years ago, Sterling and his small team of associates at Sterling Attorneys at Law, P.C. have racked up an impressive roster of wins arguing employment cases and writing contracts. Some of them have wide-ranging effects.

One involved an on-air personality who had been terminated from CBS Radio/Viacom. A toxic, caustic chemical had been spilled in the workplace, and it aggravated the allergies of nationally awarded broadcaster.

The spill ruined the woman's ability to tolerate strong scents there, and would damage her vocal cords. She urged the radio station to ban perfumes and other scents from her working area. The station refused, then fired her.

Sterling Attorneys took the highly-publicized case of *Weber v. Infinity Broadcasting* to court and won a \$10.6 million judgment against the broadcaster.

They won another case against a Plymouth business brought by a woman who was terminated because of a



family issue. Yet another case, with an automotive company, involved a company president who was fired from the firm because his supervisor was jealous of the man's successes.

He said the company made up excuses and pretextual reasons for the termination that were shot apart in court. The judgment in that case was \$15 million.

It might seem that women with families in the workplace and office politics were well-settled issues, but he said that people are still being let go for a variety of arbitrary reasons.

"Discrimination is alive and well today," Sterling said. "Corporations are just better at hiding the ways they discriminate. It only means you have to dig harder; it's more of a treasure hunt to find the information you need in court."

And the door swings both ways. Recently, he and his attorneys represented a company that was being sued by a pension administrator who claimed she was terminated for being a whistleblower. They argued, successfully, that the woman had let her skills lapse and had become obsolete.

"We routinely take cases where there's a national impact in terms of establishing right and wrong," Sterling said. "It was an unpopular case, but the perfume case set a national standard for what a company can and can't do in accommodating their employees. We try to fix the wrongs that are foisted onto people in situations where the person with the money can do whatever they want to."

His practice is varied, including successes in employment discrimination and wrongful discharge cases as well as proceedings that cleared employers of those kinds of charges. In both cases, he's been lauded for his aggressive representation of clients and professional demeanor with opposing counsel.

He also shows leadership in the documents his office produces. The firm takes pride in submitting top-level briefs to the court even when the dollar amounts involved aren't large.

"We turn out 100 percent accurate, original and unique documents. Nothing boilerplate," Sterling said. "Every client has unique needs, and this way, other firms don't know what we're going to do with a particular case. It keeps them guessing."

What was the last movie you saw in a theater?

"Up In The Air. I was interested in this because it deals with terminating employees -- my legal practice deals with the aftermath."

By Alex Lundberg

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