

## Growing firm keeps Harlan on the go

by WISCONSIN LAW JOURNAL STAFF

Published: February 16th, 2011

### Emery K. Harlan - Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan



Photo by Kevin Harnack

Since joining what would become Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan in 1994, Emery K. Harlan has used his marketing knowledge to help the firm rapidly become one of the largest minority-owned law firms in the United States.

At the same time, he's helped another entity grow. Harlan co-founded the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF) in 2001. The organization, which works to help minority-owned firms gain business from corporations, was able to hire its first full-time executive director in 2010.

His efforts have helped both the firm and NAMWOLF to grow. The firm, founded in 1989, now has 15 offices and 109 attorneys across the country.

Harlan said the firm's diverse leadership has helped it grow.

**Emery K. Harlan**

**EDUCATION:**  
Siena Heights College, 1986;  
University of Wisconsin Law School, 1989

**EMPLOYMENT:**  
Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan.

The graphic features a stylized illustration of a classical building facade with columns and a pediment. Below the illustration, the text 'LEADERS IN THE LAW' is written in a large, bold, serif font. Below this, the name 'Emery K. Harlan' is written in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. Underneath the name, the text 'EDUCATION:' is followed by two lines of text: 'Siena Heights College, 1986;' and 'University of Wisconsin Law School, 1989'. At the bottom, the text 'EMPLOYMENT:' is followed by 'Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan.'

"We have been fortunate to attract people because of our uniqueness, and so we have significantly enhanced the quality of lawyers that we have been able to bring in, and that has allowed us to retain clients and bring in new clients," Harlan said.

While it's been a team effort to help the firm grow, Harlan has brought his own areas of expertise to the table.

"I've been able to help the firm develop a national employment practice and also been very involved in the firm's marketing efforts to find new clients and practice areas."

In his personal career, Harlan has built a thriving employment law practice. He points to a high-profile discrimination case — he'd rather not name it other than to say it was in federal court — that he and a lawyer from Foley & Lardner won.

"Most outsiders would have thought it would have been an impossible case to win," he said. "We were able to put together a defense that the jury understood and accepted."

While he's had a lot of success, there are still things to accomplish, including guiding the firm as its managing partner, which he was named in February.

"What I'd like to do is see our firm continue to grow and become one of the largest law firms, period, in the United States," Harlan said.

And there's still work to do to get there.

"We probably will need to convince major corporations that a firm that has only been in existence since 1989, even though it doesn't have a long history of existence as compared to some of its peers, still has the wherewithal to provide representation in major, important manners."