

From Our Executive Principal

March 2010

I want to share with you our vision for Groom Law Group. Simply put, in this day of very large law firms, we are an independent firm focused on employee benefits that provides state of the art, strategic legal solutions for the full range of our clients' employee benefits needs. And in these days of economic challenge, we are redoubling our efforts to provide solutions in a timely and cost effective way.

Solutions to complex benefits problems take many forms, and we have the depth and breadth of expertise necessary to solve problems effectively, whether that means working closely with federal agencies and Congress in Washington, litigating complex class actions in federal or state court, creating a new plan design or product, or implementing sophisticated compliance strategies.

Employee benefits are front burner issues here in Washington, as they are across the country. Legislation to provide nearly universal health care coverage has just become a reality. This is the most important, sweeping and complex health care law since the adoption of Medicare in 1965 and it will impact every single sponsor of health care programs and provider of health plan services. Congress is critically looking at the 401(k) system and could consider an overhaul of disclosure, fiduciary and tax rules. There will be ever increasing scrutiny of executive compensation programs, not less. The new Administration has adopted new regulatory initiatives and enforcement priorities. At the same time as new laws and regulations are bound to proliferate, many of our clients are struggling to meet their pension funding and retiree medical obligations as a result of the Nation's economic crisis. It's clear that navigating benefits law is growing more challenging every day.

We partner with our clients to meet these challenges. We also recognize the increased budget and cost pressures you are under. To better serve you, we continue to evolve to better protect and advance our clients' interests. At the same time, we are striving to become a better place to work. Here is what we are doing –

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- We are committed to offering you the best and most comprehensive team of employee benefits lawyers in the United States. That is job #1 for Groom. We have nearly 60 employee benefits lawyers, all at our single Washington, D.C. location. Many of our lawyers have had extensive prior careers as federal regulators or Hill staff. More Groom attorneys are recognized by Best Lawyers for their employee benefits work than any other firm, and we regularly sit at the top of the Chambers USA and Legal 500 rankings for employee benefits lawyers.
- We are investing in our young lawyers. We have implemented a comprehensive professional development program run by a nationally known group of professional coaches. We offer regular training programs for associates using internal and external resources.
- We are committed to increasing diversity among our firm's attorneys and among attorneys in the employee benefits bar. In my role as Executive Principal, I am an active member of our Diversity Committee. In addition to our recruiting efforts, we are funding a Groom Law Group Scholar in the Minority Corporate Counsel Association Lloyd M. Johnson Jr., Scholarship Program, we are reaching out to and participating in programming provided by diverse bar organizations, and we are working with local law schools to raise the profile of employee benefits law with diverse law students. Stimulating more diversity in the employee benefits bar will require a sustained effort by many, but as leaders in the employee benefits field, we are committed to enhancing diversity among employee benefits attorneys.
- We have strengthened our pro bono program through the establishment of a new Pro Bono Committee, increased the hours we recognize as credit towards "billable" hours and actively supported non-profit organizations like MicroCredit, Links in Pink, Goodwill Industries and the Jane Adams Hull House.

Almost any lawyer can look up a regulation or an advisory opinion. But we aim much higher. Our goal is that each of our lawyers be problem solvers informed by the practical and business considerations of our clients, and drawing on the resources of the firm's 60 attorneys.

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I would appreciate hearing from you on how we are doing – what we are doing well, and where we can improve. You can contact me at (202) 861-6641 or at jwb@groom.com. As always, we are enormously grateful for our clients' continued confidence and support and for the privilege of working with our friends in the employee benefits community.

Jon Breyfogle
Executive Principal
Groom Law Group