

# Meet Your Lawyer



## **A Lawyer's Qualifications**

No one but duly admitted members of the bar may practice law. A lawyer is trained to prepare legal documents for clients, to advise on personal and business matters and to represent clients before courts and government agencies. In order to qualify for admission to the bar in Missouri, an applicant must have completed the equivalent of at least six years of college training, the last three of them in an accredited law school. An applicant must display moral fitness to practice law, as determined by an investigation, and must successfully pass a rigorous examination in many fields of law given by the Missouri Board of Law Examiners, under the general supervision of the Supreme Court of Missouri. A lawyer admitted to practice becomes an officer of the court.

## **A Lawyer's Duties**

A lawyer's first duty is to see that clients are given the benefit of all the legal rights they enjoy in connection with their problems. A lawyer is sworn to conduct cases and matters in an orderly manner and so that they may be decided upon their merits. A lawyer may not make any agreements or incur any obligations that might conflict with a client's interests.

## **Services Lawyers Render**

A lawyer can help whenever you have a problem or perform an act that involves the law. Any business transaction, every instrument you sign or agreement you make, any accident you have, or actions you take involving property, taxes, sales and countless other situations may require the advice of your lawyer. Your lawyer: can give you advice on your legal problems by telling you what to do or not to do; can prepare written instruments, such as contracts and deeds; may be able to settle disputes for you out of court with a saving of trouble and expense; can represent you in the civil courts, where disputes over property, money, damages and family relationships are determined; and can render innumerable other services because of training and experience in the law.

### **When to Go to a Lawyer**

The best time to consult with a lawyer is before, not after, you are in some legal trouble. Just as your doctor can better help you if given a chance to practice preventive medicine, so your lawyer can save you both money and difficulties if you consult your lawyer when any legal change in your position is planned.

### **Preventive Law**

A person too often thinks of his lawyer as a “last resort,” to be consulted only when a dispute seems likely to result in litigation. Many disputes could be avoided, at small cost to the client, by agreements and contracts correctly and properly drawn in the first place. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure in the courts. As a service to the public, The Missouri Bar has undertaken a program designed to point out, through brochures and other means, some of the situations where “preventive” law will help people avoid trouble and loss.

### **A Lawyer’s Duty to You in Civil Cases**

A lawyer’s whole career depends upon unswerving loyalty to clients. A lawyer may, however, see weakness in a particular case and may know that a court fight will be both expensive and probably futile for a client. In such a case, a lawyer may advise the client to bargain or, with the client’s permission, may bargain for the client. It is truly said that a settlement, even though for an amount less than claimed, may be far better than an expensive, lengthy lawsuit, the result of which is uncertain. Litigation can be a luxury. Lawyers recognize this and pursue conciliation and settlement wherever possible and advisable.

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