



EMERY K. HARLAN

Equity Partner, Milwaukee & Chicago

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PRACTICE GROUPS:

- Employment Litigation
- General Civil Litigation
 - Business Litigation
 - Commercial Litigation

EDUCATION & TRAINING

University of Wisconsin Law School, J.D.
Siena Heights College, B.B.A
Judicial Clerkship

ADMISSIONS

Admitted to practice in all state and federal courts in Wisconsin.
Admitted to practice in the Northern District of Illinois
Admitted to practice in the Northern District of Indiana
Admitted to practice in the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
License Date: 6/20/1989

AWARDS/ACCOLADES

Emery Harlan Trailblazer Award, NAMWOLF, 2022
Martindale-Hubbell® – AV Preeminent Highest Peer Rating Standard, 2013 – Present
Wisconsin Super Lawyers®, 2006 – 2008, 2016 – 2023
State Bar of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Lawyer – Lifetime Legal Innovator, 2018
Savoy's Most Influential Black Lawyers, 2015
Wisconsin Law Journal – Best Lawyers in America, 2015
Wisconsin Association of African-American Lawyers – Outstanding Member of the Year, 2012

Emery Harlan is an accomplished legal counselor, talented litigator, and influential voice promoting the advantages of engaging minority and women-owned law firms through the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms—NAMWOLF—which he co-founded in 2001.

Clients seeking a balanced approach to complexity value his seasoned counsel and masterful representation in civil rights, employment and commercial disputes. But what makes Emery particularly unique—and in demand—is his atypical worldview, which he brings to every matter his clients entrust to him.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

“As an African American equity partner of a small minority-owned law firm, I’m sensitive to different backgrounds, experiences, and strengths. My insights and perspectives are usually vastly different from those commonly found in the larger corporate law firms and therefore especially advantageous in employment-related lawsuits and other contentious employee situations.”

Emery represents corporations of all sizes, governmental entities, small businesses, and non-profit organizations. A significant portion of his cases involve contested termination, harassment, and discrimination; however, employers and governmental entities engage him for a wide variety of matters and advice.

A distinguishing feature of Emery’s employment law practice is his commitment to working with every case angle to resolve matters quickly and amicably. He considers all possible means to diffuse these often emotional and highly-charged employment law cases, where livelihoods and reputations can be at stake. He aims to strike a balance between aggressively defending employment law claims against his clients and helping them manage current relationships with valued employees who may be involved.

“I am always looking for an opportunity, at every turn, for early resolutions, recognizing that disputed matters rarely get better as they age.”

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Waukesha County National Association
for the Advancement of Colored People
(NAACP) – Community Service Award, 2011

Wisconsin Law Journal – Leader in the Law,
2011

ABA Journal – Legal Rebel, Diversifying the
Legal Profession, 2009

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

National Association of Minority and
Women Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF)
(Board Member, Co-Founder, Past Board
Chair)

Minority In-House Counsel Association
(Chairman Emeritus)(Steering Committee
Member)

GENERAL LITIGATION

Emery also handles various general litigation for government entities and businesses. For example, he frequently handles section 1983 and open records disputes for government agencies and has asserted offensive claims for retailers against third parties in merchandise damage disputes. He has defended companies in corporate fiduciary duty conflicts, helped commercial property owners with contentious zoning-related cases, and worked on numerous -- and varied business-related matters.

Whether it's employment or general commercial litigation, Emery always focuses on meeting his client's objectives and ensuring they receive frequent and meaningful communications. He prioritizes absolute clarity on factual information. To the most significant degree possible, he also tries to discern the opposing party's desired outcome, which, when considered, can result in a prompt yet satisfactory resolution for his clients.

CASE MANAGEMENT

"MWH has deeply experienced paralegals, making it possible to assign tasks that other firms would normally assign to an attorney. This model provides considerable cost savings for our clients."

While the work Emery takes on varies, how he handles case management is consistent. He generally makes it his goal to minimize staffing without sacrificing quality. To that end, his teams typically include a paralegal and an associate. They hold regular, weekly check-ins to assure alignment. He provides frequent client updates on case status, significant developments, and execution on their objectives.

DEEP-SEATED VALUES

Emery attributes his enthusiasm for the law, diverse interests, and deep-seated values to his early life experiences. Childhood and early adulthood presented challenges but also provided opportunities and pivotal role models. Among them was an attorney Richard Hatcher, who served as the first African American mayor of a city with over 100,000 citizens.

"My parents held Mayor Hatcher in high esteem over the years. This, in combination with him being an attorney, planted the seed and motivated me to pursue a legal career. My background has provided me a keen awareness of socioeconomic and racial differences that often impact diverse workforces and can sometimes play an out-sized role in resolving contested employment matters. My awareness, insights and worldview offer significant benefits to companies needing non-traditional counsel to power through tough problems."

AMBASSADOR FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN LAW

As an ambassador for diversity and inclusion, Emery brings law firms, lawyers, and entities together under the umbrella of the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms. His passion for the mission he helped establish is palpable. His work on NAMWOLF's behalf is legendary, and its success exceptional.

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Emery's early involvement in the ABA Minority Counsel Program and the State Bar of Wisconsin Diversity and Inclusion program prompted his desire to promote the interests of diverse private practice lawyers. He dedicated a significant amount of time to both organizations, with the idea of trying to get purchasers of business and governmental legal services to include minority and women-owned firms on their outside counsel panels. Soon, he recognized the need for a national organization focused solely on that objective, and NAMWOLF was born.

Since its founding, NAMWOLF has strengthened the economic viability of firms owned by women, people of color, and now LGBTQ individuals. NAMWOLF members have created, and continue to generate, greater demand for these firms. Consequently, its initiatives have enhanced their ability to survive, grow, and thrive.

NAMWOLF has also helped companies realize that talent is not solely the province of "big law." Attorneys from large law firms, government, or even those right out of law school who now practice in smaller, minority and women-owned firms bring value to representations and show qualities worthy of opportunities to achieve and succeed at the highest levels.

Today, Emery continues his efforts to introduce a myriad of companies to NAMWOLF's existence, purpose, and value proposition. He works to bring them into the fold and reap the benefits that diverse outside counsel legal teams can offer their organizations.

"The success of NAMWOLF has far surpassed all expectations I envisioned. Although I was the initial catalyst, the organization and its members have gone beyond any contributions I may have made, making NAMWOLF the premier network of the most outstanding law firms in our country. If you want to work with the best and support diversity and inclusion, NAMWOLF is a great organization to consider. MWH is proud to be a part of all its accomplishments."