The National Association of namwolf® Minority & Women Owned Law Firms

150 N. Michigan Ave., Ste. 800
Chicago, IL 60601
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www.namwolf.org

A Note from our CEO
By Joel Stern, CEO, NAMWOLF

Hello NAMWOLF Member Firms and In-House Counsel,

It's been an exciting and very busy 90 days as the Chief Executive Officer of NAMWOLF. I thought I would take this time to share with all of you what I have been doing and let you know the progress that we are making. It's a journey but I will tell you, we are moving in the right direction and making a lot of progress. And, I'm very excited about the future of NAMWOLF and truly appreciate the warm reception that I have received from Member Firms and In-House counsel. From my vantage point, our future growth and success starts with listening to our 121 Member Firms, the corporate legal groups that are both active with NAMWOLF and those that are "on the fence" and the NAMWOLF Team that supports our internal operations and keep this organization running.

With respect to the Member Firms, the **Open Door** has been a tremendous experience. I'm learning a lot about Member Firm expectations and challenges. I'm also collecting many great ideas regarding making NAMWOLF an even better home to be a part of as well as sharing my perspective on what the firms can do to make their return on investment better. The open and informal dialogues with the Member Firms has been a mutually beneficial experience that has been good for the firms, good for me and good for the organization. In the spirit of open and candid communications, we will continue having our Member Firm quarterly Town Hall calls where we will share information and respond to questions from the Firms. The response to these Town Halls has been very positive. And, I'm only an email or phone call away if anyone has any questions or issues they want to surface.

On the in-house side, I'm working with our **Advisory Council Chair, Barbara Stevens**, and all of the Advisory Council Members to make certain NAMWOLF is listening to in-house and their views on how to make NAMWOLF and the NAMWOLF firms an even more attractive proposition to in-house making outside counsel decisions. In-house is a very important piece of the NAMWOLF puzzle and the more that all of us can understand what in-house is looking for, the more NAMWOLF can be effective in what we are doing.

I'm also listening to the great ideas from the NAMWOLF Team (Jane, Sherisse and Yolanda). As a result, we have recently **updated several of our NAMWOLF Materials** including our Corporate Counsel Guide, our NAMWOLF deck that we use to explain NAMWOLF, a simple one-pager on the NAMWOLF Partner Program and our Vendor and Corporate Sponsorship Forms. If you want copies of any of these, just ask one of the Team. And, I'm happy to say we have a **website enhancement project** underway that should be ready for "prime time" in early July. To set expectations, we are confident that both the aesthetics and the search engine capability of the website will be much improved once we roll out the enhanced site, but there will be more work to do in the future. One step at a time but this is critical to our success. We are also using social media a lot more to communicate relevant information about NAMWOLF, Member Firms and In-House.

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Working closely with Lynn and the Board in setting and then achieving our **Board 2014 priorities** clearly is a large part of my job**.** Not a day goes by when I'm not in touch with at least one of our Board Members tackling one of the many projects that we have underway this year. A sampling of these projects include: **Committee Restructuring** and creation of **Practice Area Committees** led by Linda Burwell; **National Development** led by Justi Miller and involving more than 30 lawyers (in-house and firm); **Corporate Attraction** and how to make NAMWOLF more attractive to in-house led by Barbara Stevens and Martin Greene; and **National Footprint** led by Lizz Patrick, which is focused on getting us more law firms in states and in practice areas that in-house counsel are looking for. In addition, we have regular meetings and several committees and other projects to work on. Lynn and the entire Board are focused on the right tasks, which are primarily concentrated on achieving our mission and vision. I'm very proud of this Board, which works as hard as any Board that I have ever seen operate.

I'm also spending a lot of my time on our **Annual Meeting, which is set for Philadelphia on September 21 – 24.** The NAMWOLF Team is working with our Member Firm Co-Chairs (Fran Griesing and Joe Tucker) and our five In-House Co-Chairs (representing Exelon, Merck, DuPont, Comcast and the University of Penn) to make this meeting the best ever. Based on the hard work from many and a great venue, I do not think anyone will be disappointed. In mid-April, we had a kick-off cocktail event at the Union League sponsored by 10 Member Firms that had over 80 lawyers in attendance. Thanks to Cheryl Nicolson and her local development team and our sponsoring law firms for making this a very successful event. Every in-house member that attended has stated that they will be coming to our meeting. And, this event has led to inquiries from in-house about NAMWOLF and the Member Firms. Music to our collective ears.

I am also taking advantage of every speaking opportunity that comes along to proselytize the NAMWOLF message, whether in legal forums or to individual corporate legal groups. Recently, I was asked to be on a panel of the **Fearless Women's Network in Philadelphi**a where Sheryl Axelrod was co-chair and did a tremendous job not only speaking on the inequities with respect to women in the legal profession but with respect to minorities as well. At this event, I spoke about NAMWOLF and how we are effectuating change each and every day. I challenged In-House to get more involved with our organization. I also had the opportunity to speak at the **Cranes General Counsel Summit** in Detroit thanks to four of our Detroit Firms sponsoring a lunch event. Earlier in the year, I was honored to have been asked to speak at the **Coca Cola legal diversity summit** in Atlanta. Jennifer Manning from Coke Legal invited me to talk about NAMWOLF and dispel many myths about using NAMWOLF firms. Not only were Coke attorneys present, but there were also attorneys from several other Atlanta-based corporations as well as many NAMWOLF firms in attendance. A terrific event that I hope many other corporations emulate. In addition, I am meeting with In-House legal groups across the United States with the intent to get more corporate legal groups involved in NAMWOLF and ones that have tipped their toes in our waters to go head first and all in. As I have said before, it's an easy sell since I bought what I'm now selling. And, I'm confident it is making a difference.

In conjunction with all of this, we moved to **150 N. Michigan Avenue** May 1 into a space that is much more functional than what we had before. If you are in Chicago, please find us and stop by to say hello. It's right across the street from the Bean and in the heart of Chicago.

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While there is so much more we want to accomplish and we have a full plate of challenges, it's been a great 90 days and I can't be more proud of everyone that has worked so hard together including the NAMWOLF Team, the NAMWOLF Board, the Advisory Council, and all of you. A special thanks to all of the corporations, law firms and vendors who have agreed to sponsor us in 2014. In this role, I have a much greater appreciation of the need to find sponsors to fund all of the work we do as well as the projects we want to undertake.

Thank you for the opportunity to lead this wonderful organization filled with passionate and smart attorneys all working as one to do the right thing for the right reason. Have a great summer and see you in the fall!

Joel

Joel Stern has been actively associated with NAMWOLF since 2006 and has served as a board member and also as chair of the In-House Advisory Council. Since 2010, he has headed his own consulting practice, providing a range of services to corporate law departments and law firms. Click here for Joel's full bio.