

To The Coast And Back Again: Tips For Lawyers Moving To The Twin Cities



By: Norman H. Pentelovitch

The path from Minnesota to a coast and back is well-traveled by lawyers. I know because I just did it myself, returning to Minneapolis after working for both a large law firm and then a small trial boutique in Washington, D.C.

For those considering a move to the Midwest, here are five things to know about practicing in Minnesota before you book your ticket, pack your car, or call for a (probably very expensive) Uber:

1. **Start the bar admission process early.** If you're one of those lucky people who have been in practice long enough to be admitted without having to take the Minnesota bar exam, congratulations! The hard part is over. That said, the process to be admitted is estimated to take between four and six months, so start early. Begin working on your application as soon as you've accepted a position or decided to make the move. Often, you'll be required to submit additional information, like a criminal background check from where you currently

live, and getting those materials once you've already moved can prove challenging. Other waivers can also apply, so it is worth researching your best route to admission. If you will be taking the bar exam, good luck!

2. **Get involved. Now.** There are countless organizations that Twin Cities lawyers can join, with work that will have a real, immediate impact on the community. Legal Aid. The Volunteer Lawyers Network. The ACLU. What's your passion? Minnesota attorneys have been on the front lines of some of the most important civil rights and social justice issues of the last half-century, and assistance from lawyers with time to contribute is always needed. Regardless of what issues you care about, there are organizations that will be happy to have your time and expertise. Getting involved with a local non-profit, or the local chapter of a national organization, is also a great way to meet other attorneys who care about the same issues you do. Reach out before you move and you can hit the ground running.

3. **Never eat lunch alone.** Invite people to lunch. Invite yourself along to lunches with others (though not too often). And happy hours. And Bar Association dinners, Federal Bar Association lunches, ABA section meetings, CLEs, meet-the-judge events. The opportunity to meet peers, established practitioners, and even judges, is available practically every day of the week. The sooner you get out and start meeting people, the sooner you will find yourself across the table from, or arguing a motion to, someone you've already met.

4. **Appreciate the (actual) work-life balance.** Chances are good that you are moving to Minnesota hoping to achieve a much sought after "balance" between work and personal life. Here you will find that lawyers work hard and have high professional

expectations, but also encourage experiences outside of work. You're just as likely to get a question about your weekend plans as about the arguments in your brief. Having just left the East Coast, such inquiries initially were off-putting, but I quickly learned that they reflected a genuine interest in life outside the office, because for attorneys here that outside life matters too.

5. **Get published.** Minnesota has a profusion of legal magazines and other law-related publications, so you will have many opportunities to write, comment, edit, and offer your opinion to the Twin Cities legal community. You will be surprised how often someone will recognize you based on an article you wrote that was published in a local magazine.

Practicing law in Minnesota combines many of the best aspects of the profession: a sophisticated legal community of practitioners, judges, and scholars; high quality law schools nearby; a wealth of businesses facing complex, challenging legal issues; and more than a dozen Fortune 500 company headquarters. This type of community creates interesting, important legal work that is impactful throughout the country. Especially for young attorneys hoping to get in-court experience or more client interactions, you will be hard-pressed to find a better community for pursuing your career.

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