



## **U.S. News Media Group and Best Lawyers® Release 2011-2012 “Best Law Firms” Rankings**

### ***Rankings of nearly 10,000 U.S. law firms by practice area***

Washington D.C. –November 1, 2011– U.S. News Media Group and Best Lawyers® have released the 2011-2012 “Best Law Firms” rankings, marking the second edition of this highly-anticipated annual analysis. The national first-tier rankings will be featured in *U.S. News & World Report’s* Money issue, on newsstands November 15, 2011; the national and metropolitan first-tier rankings are featured in the “Best Law Firms” standalone publication, which is being distributed to 30,000 general counsel and in digital format to 58,000 private practice lawyers worldwide; the rankings in their entirety are posted online at <http://bestlawfirms.usnews.com>.

These rankings, which are presented in tiers, showcase 9,633 different law firms ranked nationally in one or more of 75 major legal practice areas and in metropolitan or state rankings in one or more of 119 major legal practice areas. An important addition to this year’s rankings is the naming of one “Law Firm of the Year” in each of the 75 nationally ranked practice areas. Law firms receiving this designation had an impressive overall performance in our research and are receiving the first award of this kind by U.S. News and Best Lawyers®.

Full data for the law firms that received rankings is available online, from the largest firms in the country to hundreds of one-person and two-person law firms, providing a comprehensive view of the U.S. legal profession that is unprecedented both in the range of firms represented and in the range of qualitative and quantitative data used to develop the rankings. Achieving a high ranking is a special distinction that signals a unique combination of excellence and breadth of expertise.

The mission of “Best Law Firms” from the start has been to help guide referring lawyers and clients – from the country’s largest companies needing corporate legal advice to individuals needing to get a divorce or write a will – issues that have a bet-the-company implication (in the case of a corporation) or a potentially life-changing result (in the case of an individual).

"U.S. News has more than two decades of experience in providing the public with the most accurate and in-depth rankings of a wide range of institutions, including our Best Law Schools rankings," says Tim Smart, Executive Editor of U.S. News & World Report. "Law firms are an integral part of our rankings and a natural accompaniment to the law schools rankings."

“Best Lawyers was very pleased with the reaction from the legal profession and from legal clients to the first edition of the “Best Law Firms” rankings,” says Steven Naifeh, President of Best Lawyers. “By combining hard data with peer reviews, and client assessments, we continue to believe that we are providing clients with the most thorough, accurate, and helpful rankings of law firms ever developed.”

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### **About the U.S. News Media Group**

The *U.S. News Media Group* is a multi-platform digital publisher of news and analysis, which includes the monthly *U.S. News & World Report* magazine, the digital-only *U.S. News Weekly* magazine, [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com), and [www.rankingsandreviews.com](http://www.rankingsandreviews.com). Focusing on Health, Money & Business, Education, and Public Service/Opinion, the *U.S. News Media Group* has earned a reputation as the leading provider of service news and information that improves the quality of life of its readers. The U.S. News Media Group’s signature franchises include its News You Can Use® brand of journalism and its series of consumer guides that include rankings of colleges, graduate schools, hospitals, health plans, and more.

### **About Best Lawyers**

Best Lawyers® is the oldest and most respected peer-review publication in the legal profession. For over a quarter century, the company has helped lawyers and clients find legal counsel in distant jurisdictions or unfamiliar specialties. The 2012 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America* includes 41,284 lawyers covering all 50 states and the District of Columbia and is based on more than 3.9 million detailed evaluations of lawyers by other lawyers. Best Lawyers® also publishes peer-reviewed listings of lawyers in nearly 70 other countries, covering many of the world’s major legal markets. Best Lawyers® lists are excerpted in a wide range of general interest, business and legal publications worldwide, reaching an audience of more than 17 million readers.



### **Methodology for 2011-2012 U.S. News - Best Lawyers® "Best Law Firms"**

The U.S. News – Best Lawyers® "Best Law Firms" rankings are based on a rigorous evaluation process that includes the collection of client and lawyer evaluations, peer review from leading attorneys in their field, and review of additional information provided by law firms as part of the formal submission process. An unprecedented amount of data was collected in the project's second year, and this combined data resulted in the 2011-2012 "Best Law Firms" rankings. To be eligible for a ranking, a law firm must have at least one lawyer who is included in Best Lawyers as part of the annual peer review assessment. For more information on Best Lawyers®, please visit <http://www.bestlawyers.com/>.



Clients were asked to provide feedback on firm practice groups, using a scale of 1 (weakest) to 5 (strongest), addressing expertise, responsiveness, understanding of a business and its needs, cost-effectiveness, civility, and whether they would refer another client to the firm. Clients also had the option to write-in the names of law firms they've worked with on other matters and within practice areas beyond those they were asked to comment on by the submitting firm. Some clients chose to write a comment about their experience with the law firm. These comments are for reference only and were not used as data points in the formal evaluation process.

Lawyers voted on expertise, responsiveness, integrity, cost-effectiveness, whether they would refer a matter to a firm, and whether they consider a firm a worthy competitor. A principal enhancement to the methodology used to compile this year's national rankings included a national ballot in addition to the metropolitan ballots. The national ballot was sent to a distinct, geographically diverse group of attorneys listed in Best Lawyers who have received consistently high peer review over the course of several years. We asked this group to vote on law firms that have a preeminent national presence within specified legal practice area(s) they know well. In addition to information from these surveys, the rankings incorporate the **3.9 million evaluations of 41,284 individual leading lawyers** collected by Best Lawyers® in its most recent annual survey.

In addition to lawyer and client feedback, law firms were asked to provide us with general demographic and background information on the law firm and attorneys. This survey also gave firms an opportunity to share information on client profile, the significance of major legal matters they've undertaken, monetary and transactional values (where meaningful and applicable), and other data that speaks to the strengths of a law firms' practice areas.

All of the quantitative and qualitative data were combined into an overall "Best Law Firms" score for each firm. This data was then compared to other firms within the same metropolitan area and at the national level. Because firms were often separated by small or insignificant differences in overall score, we use a tiering system rather than ranking law firms sequentially. The first tier includes those firms that scored within a certain percentage of the highest-scoring firm(s); the second tier, those firms that scored within a certain percentage of the next highest scoring firm(s), and so on. The number of tiers included in each practice area or metropolitan area ranking varies. Of the **10,968 firms** that were **eligible** to submit information for the ranking process, **9,633 firms**, including a large number of one-person firms, **received rankings**, and **6,983 of those firms received first tier national and/or metropolitan rankings**.

Metropolitan areas are defined by assessing the population of eligible law firms geographically to guarantee enough comparative data to produce accurate results. There are **7 states** that had a high percentage of eligible law firms located in one large metropolitan area. Because there were also eligible law firms outside of those metropolitan areas, but not enough to create accurate results for separate metropolitan rankings, results were produced for the entire state. The states that fall into this category are: **Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Rhode Island, and Utah**.

Practice area rankings were produced both **nationally and within 177 metropolitan areas across the United States**. Because some practice areas have minimal presence in particular legal markets, or because there was not enough data garnered for proper evaluation, some practice areas that are covered in our research are not represented in the national rankings or various metropolitan rankings. The 2011-2012 "Best Law Firms" **national rankings cover 75 practice areas**, while **as many as 119 practice areas are covered on the metropolitan lists**.

For the first time, one law firm in each of the 75 practice areas ranked nationally, received the prestigious **2011 – 2012 "Law Firm of the Year"** recognition. Law Firms receiving the "Law Firm of the Year" designation had an impressive overall performance in our

research of a given practice area , representing a significant showing in the 2011-2012 U.S.News – Best Lawyers® “Best Law Firms” initiative.

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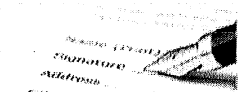
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