



Karen D. Olson

Partner

Contact

Minneapolis

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Overview

Karen D. Olson is an experienced regulatory, compliance, and litigation attorney that uses her significant government and private practice experience to represent her clients. She served as deputy attorney general for the State of Minnesota for more than a decade, where she represented the attorney general, governor, legislature, and state agencies and boards on complex and high-profile legal matters.

During her tenure at the Attorney General's Office, Karen led the teams of attorneys representing various state agencies and boards and worked closely with the attorney general in overseeing the legal matters and office. She served as general counsel to the Minnesota Board of Medical Practice and managed the attorneys and investigators representing all 17 health-related licensing boards. She also led the attorneys providing legal representation to the various environmental agencies, including the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, and Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, in addition to maintaining responsibilities for other state agencies and boards, including the Minnesota Department of Revenue, and overseeing all Minnesota tax litigation.

Karen previously led the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Division at the Attorney General's Office and prosecuted numerous landmark cases that gained national attention and resulted in significant monetary recoveries and industry changes. She regularly interacted with other state and federal entities on joint enforcement actions, investigations, and regulatory matters; worked on legislative matters; and testified before the legislature. A significant number of the cases involved matters that directly affected the citizens of Minnesota, including issues involving health care, personal consumer products, and financial services products.

While in private practice, Karen handled complex litigation matters for clients operating in a variety of industries, including defending national manufacturing companies in multidistrict litigation and class actions involving hundreds of cases across the country. She has also litigated many business disputes that benefited from her pre-law business background.

Karen has led hundreds of enforcement actions and government investigations for the attorney general, environmental state agencies, Minnesota health licensing boards, and other state agencies and boards. She uses her investigation and

enforcement background to assist clients on regulatory matters, pending government investigations, and enforcement matters to advise them on how to proceed and on how to take proactive steps to potentially avoid or minimize regulatory concerns. She represents clients in all stages of interaction with the government and regulator and understands the unique challenges in dealing with these entities, and helps clients understand and effectively deal with government rules and regulations, government inquiries, and lawsuits.

Karen has significant first-chair trial experience and has tried numerous cases in state and federal district and administrative courts. She has also represented clients and argued matters before the Minnesota Court of Appeals, Minnesota Supreme Court, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

Education

- Mitchell Hamline School of Law (J.D.), *magna cum laude*
- University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management (B.S.B.)

Bar Admissions

- Illinois
- Minnesota
- North Dakota
- Wisconsin

Court Admissions

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin
- U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota

Community Involvement

- Mitchell Hamline School of Law, Negotiation Seminar, Adjunct Professor / Coach
- Minnesota Women Lawyers, Leadership Council
- Concordia Academy, Board Member

Distinctions

- Lawdragon 500, Global Leaders in Crisis Management, 2025
- *Minnesota Lawyer*, Top Women in Law, 2023

Memberships

- American Bar Association

- Minnesota State Bar Association
- Wisconsin State Bar Association
- Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation
- National Mining Association, Lands Committee
- Minnesota Women Lawyers, Leadership Council
- National Association of Women Business Owners
- Association for Corporate Growth, Minnesota Chapter

Presentations and Publications

- "The Shape of Water: Back to the Basics of the Federal Clean Water Act," 55th Spring Conference on Environmental Law, American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (ABA SEER), April 2026
- "WOTUS – The Supreme Court's Impact and Where Are We Now?" SME Minnesota Conference, April 2025
- "Reining in Federal Agency Action in Regulatory Programs," SME Minnesota Conference, April 2025
- "Current State of WOTUS and Implications for Managing Water and Nutrients," Minnesota Soil Health Coalition Premier Soil Health Event, December 2024
- "Groundwater / Surface Water Interface – Emerging Regulatory Challenges and New Solutions for the Power Industry," World of Coal Ash, May 2022
- ["County of Maui Revisited: How the First Application of the 'Functional Equivalent' Standard for Discharges to Groundwater Went Wrong,"](#) American Bar Association, January 2022
- ["PolyMet matter back in hands of Court of Appeals,"](#) *Minnesota Lawyer*, November 2021
- ["Retailer can't claim tax offset based on uncollectible debts,"](#) *Minnesota Lawyer*, May 2021
- ["Sharpening Up,"](#) *Medical Plastics News*, December 2020
- ["eDiscovery Essentials – Practical Tips to Plan and Control Costs and Risks,"](#) Mitchell Hamline School of Law, May 2021
- "eDiscovery Predictability in an Unpredictable World: Mitigating Costs and Risks," Live CLE Webinar, November 2020
- ["2020 Corporate Counsel Symposium,"](#) Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel, October 2020
- ["Groundwater/Surface Water Interface – Emerging Regulatory Challenges and New Solutions for the Mining Industry,"](#) Geosyntec and Spencer Fane Webinar, September 2020
- "Bridging the Gap Between Experts & Lawyers: Evaluating, Preparing & Presenting Expert Testimony, Moderator, Science, Technology and the Law," Minnesota Attorney General CLE, June 2017
- "Privacy Issues – Today and Tomorrow," Minnesota Attorney General CLE, November 2013
- "Document Preservation Requirements and 'Litigation Holds'," Evidence in the Courtroom, Minnesota State Bar Association CLE, April 2007
- "Practical Tips in Negotiation," Minnesota Attorney General CLE, April 2004
- "Preparing for the Deposition, Strategic Litigation for Public Lawyers," Minnesota Attorney General CLE, June 2002
- "State Antitrust Enforcement and State-Federal Enforcement Collaboration," MILE Antitrust CLE, April 2000

Related Experience

- Served as General Counsel to the Minnesota Board of Medical Practice and overseeing the attorneys and investigators conducting investigations and enforcement actions for 17 health-related licensing boards, including medical practice, pharmacy, dentistry, and nursing.
- Managed the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Division and leading hundreds of high-profile investigations and enforcement actions for violations of consumer fraud, deceptive trade practices, false advertising, and antitrust laws.
- Oversaw the office's environmental, natural resources, and agricultural work representing the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

- Served as General Counsel to the prior Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Citizens' Board.
- Led the Residential Utility Division's participation in public utility matters before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission on behalf of residential and small business utility consumers pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 8.33.
- Oversaw the division representing the Minnesota Department of Revenue at the Minnesota Tax Court and Minnesota Supreme Court.
- Led the Education Division and serving as lead counsel on a class action case brought against the Department of Education, Commissioner of Education, Governor, and Legislature.
- Handled high-profile litigation in state and federal district and appellate courts and administrative proceedings.
- Represented companies in a wide variety of litigation matters, including class actions and MDLs.
- Recently tried a complex white-collar case involving allegations of conspiracy to violate the Anti-Kickback and money laundering statutes in U.S. District Court, Northern District of Texas.
- Prior to becoming a lawyer, Karen used her business degree to work as a financial analyst for a national bank and as an insurance underwriter for fidelity bonds and directors' and officers' liability coverage at a national insurance company. Karen brings both her business and law background to handle every client issue and really works with her clients to understand the needs of the business.