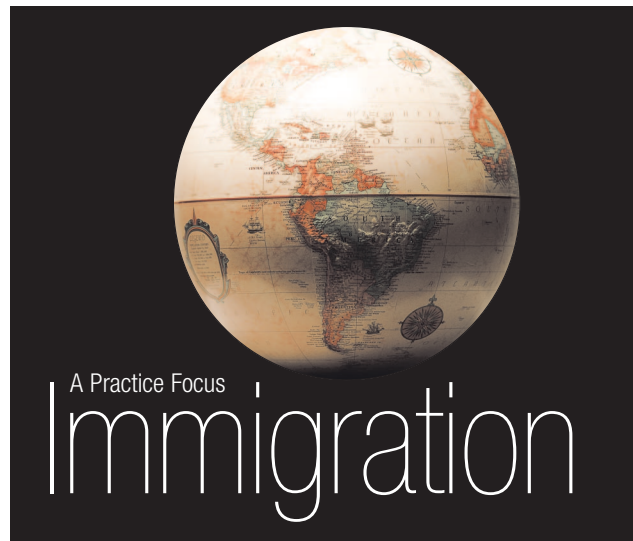


Identifying **10** Leading Immigration Attorneys

For years the founder of Hair Club for Men sold the goods by assuring us, "I'm not just the president, I'm also a client." Likewise, our 10 Leading Lawyers include several whose own families are fairly recent arrivals to the United States. They know from personal experience why people seek American visas, green cards, and, ultimately, citizenship.

As for *Legal Times*, we discovered in the process of putting this report together that one of our colleagues relied on a Leading Lawyer to obtain his green card many years ago. But, we hasten to add, that employee had no role in selecting, reporting on, or editing the profiles in this report.



How did we choose the top 10? We solicited suggestions from readers. Freelance reporter (and former *Legal Times* editor) Jenna Greene did extensive reporting. And then we settled on 10 outstanding attorneys, whose stories we tell here.

Leading LAWYERS

Ten of the D.C. Area's Top Immigration Attorneys

Denise Hammond

Tobin, O'Connor, Ewing & Richard

Creativity and persistence are the hallmarks of Denise Hammond's legal approach.

Whether persuading Yoko Ono to write a letter in support of a Swedish artist seeking a visa or helping a railroad hire new conductors from Canada quickly, Hammond makes it happen.

Mary McAuliffe, vice president of external relations for Union Pacific Railroad, says: "I can't imagine anyone better than Denise. She's tenacious, and she never gives up. She's continuously looking for new ways to make her case."

In 2003, Union Pacific found itself critically short of conductors in the United States but was able to locate qualified workers in Canada. The 79 Canadian conductors needed H-2B visas, the type granted when a company can demonstrate that workers with necessary skills are temporarily in short supply domestically.

Bringing the workers here as fast as possible was, recalls McAuliffe, "a huge focus" for everyone at Union Pacific. Hammond came through, getting the visas approved in about a month.

"It's amazing—she doesn't let up," McAuliffe marvels. "I remember saying to her, 'You're not even in our company, and you care as much as we do.'"

Another complex case for Hammond involved Chinese oil-drilling engineers. When Aspect Energy wanted to drill for oil in the United States, the company found that the latest rig technology was largely unavailable here. So in 2005 the company contracted with GWDC America, a subsidiary of China National Petroleum Co., to provide and operate rigs in Texas and Louisiana. Hammond's role was to help GWDC obtain about 60 visas for Chinese managers and employees with specialized knowledge.

"I feel like I'm helping to address the energy crisis, since these employees are exploring and recovering U.S. oil," says Hammond, adding that GWDC has also hired more than 130 U.S. workers in less than 10 months.

Hammond, 50, is also known for her skill in obtaining O visas and green cards for "aliens of extraordinary ability." In one

case, a client wanted to hire a private chef from abroad. Hammond called up celebrity chef Charlie Trotter ("who doesn't know me from Adam," she says) and persuaded him to write a letter attesting to the significance of the foreign chef's culinary achievements. She did the same thing with Yoko Ono when seeking an O visa for a Swedish artist who had exhibited her work with Ono's in a New York gallery.

Earlier this year, Hammond came up with an innovative immigration category for Rick Adams, director of the AOL multimedia children's site KOL. She persuaded the government to issue the British citizen a green card on the basis of extraordinary ability in interactive children's entertainment.

"I love Denise. Without her, I wouldn't have a green card," says Adams. "I'd easily give her my left kidney if she asked."

Hammond even obtained an O visa for a democracy activist from East Timor. She crafted an unusual category for him as well: extraordinary ability in democracy building.

"The narrower the field, the easier it is to qualify as extraordinary," says Hammond.

Bryan Logan, chairman of EarthData International Inc., describes Hammond as "incredibly detailed. Nothing gets overlooked." Logan has worked with Hammond for 20 years—she handles all H-1B visa, green-card, and citizenship matters for the geospatial-services provider.

As a busy executive, Logan says, he appreciates Hammond's straightforward approach. "She tells you like it is," he says. "Then she does what she says."

After Hammond earned her J.D. from Hofstra University School of Law in 1979, she went to work for the Justice Department as a litigator in the Federal Programs branch. In 1983 she joined Pierson, Ball & Dowd (now part of Reed Smith). Two years later, she opened her own firm. "If I was going to work that hard, I wanted to work for myself," she says.

But this past July, after 21 years on her own, she joined D.C.'s Tobin, O'Connor, Ewing & Richard as of counsel. Hammond calls her new colleagues "stellar attorneys in complementary disciplines." One particular attraction was partner Kerry Richard. Because both Hammond and Richard do work for MedStar Health, the company's deputy general counsel, Elizabeth Simpson, can take advantage of one-stop shopping.

Simpson has high praise for Hammond: "If it can be done, she'll do it."



Denise Hammond

DIEGO M. RADZINSKI