JONES&KELLER
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

D. Laird Blue

SHAREHOLDER

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"The point at which personal, legal and tax considerations meet is where issues become more complicated, and for me, more interesting to solve."

Laird Blue's clients benefit from his knowledge, practical experience, and personal investment in solving their legal issues. He makes it a practice to look at all aspects of a client's case before providing clear advice and strategies. Hands-on leadership and attention to detail helps position clients ahead of the issues and achieve their goals.

Laird's tax practice centers on advising individuals, families, and corporations in tax controversy, estate planning and probate, deferred compensation, and general tax issues. He also works with mineral and royalty interest holders to manage their mineral interests. His corporate practice focuses on a wide range of general business issues encountered daily.

In addition to practicing law, Laird is active professionally through the Colorado, Denver, and American Bar Associations and in the community, holding several rotating non-profit board positions in support of education and the arts. Outside of work, you'll see Laird's competitive nature on the tennis court and on the sidelines watching his sons' baseball games and rugby matches.

EXPERIENCE – TAX

Laird represents individuals, families, and entities in a wide variety of federal, state, and local tax matters. His insights support clients' decision-making as they address personal and business income, employment, transfer and estate tax matters.

Tax controversy. Laird represents individuals and businesses before federal, state, and local taxing authorities in all aspects of civil tax controversy work, including audits, back tax payments, civil and trust fund penalty matters. His goal is to assist clients in understanding the immediate, short-term, and long-term implications of options available throughout the process. By anticipating information requests, negotiating reasonable agreements, and proactively communicating, Laird builds trust with taxing authorities that leads to better client outcomes. He also works with individuals, couples, and families with their estate planning needs.

Trust, estates, and probate. Laird represents personal representatives, executors, trustees, beneficiaries, and descendants in probate proceedings and matters. He assists personal representatives and executors with their obligations as a fiduciary of the estate. Laird works with trustees in the management of trusts for both current and contingent beneficiaries. He also guides beneficiaries with estates and trusts to assert and protect their rights during the probate process and/or the duration of a trust.

Deferred compensation. Laird prepares and reviews non-qualified deferred compensation plans and agreements, including stock options, stock appreciation right, phantom stock, and omnibus plans. He advises employers establishing new plans under §409A and handling issues arising over the life of a plan, including the impact of plan failures on the employer and plan participants. Laird also assists employees in understanding the impact of §409A on agreements with their employers.

SIGNIFICANT REPRESENTATIONS

- Filed and received positive Private Letter Ruling on behalf of a subchapter S corporation bank holding company correcting the unintended termination of legal entity status following a stock transfer from the founder to trusts created for the founder's descendants.
- Represented single-member LLC owned by a Native American tribe in negotiating a hedge fund investment and specific provisions regarding federal tax issues impacted by the LLC's sovereign immunity status.
- Represented individuals and business owners at risk and threatened with the assessment of the Trust Fund Recovery Penalty (TFRP) and/or against whom the TFRP has been assessed for failure to pay employment taxes to the IRS. Implemented strategies to prevent assessment of the TFRP against the individuals and limit the impact of the assessed TFRP.
- Represented the manager of multiple restaurants in an IRS investigation over delinquent employment taxes, which the IRS determined were the responsibility of the majority owners of the restaurants and not the manager. Cooperated with the IRS Criminal Investigation Division in the investigation of the majority owners.
- Represented individuals, couples, and business owners addressing delinquent federal and state income tax returns for multiple tax years, implementing strategies to defeat aggressive tax collection efforts and protect the assets of innocent spouses from the IRS as well as negotiating agreements to resolve and manage amounts owed.
- Represented companies with non-qualified deferred compensation plans that were in violation of IRC §409A. Assisted clients with the implementation of corrective measures and compliance reporting requirements, and communications with impacted employees and the IRS.
- Represented a national bank in the formation of their Trust Department, including drafting department policies and procedures for the approval of the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency.

EXPERIENCE – MINERAL OWNERSHIP INTERESTS

Laird represents families and businesses that own mineral rights, royalty, interest and/or overriding royalty interests (mineral interests) in the management, monitoring, and monetizing of their mineral interests. He assists families as they contemplate mineral interest succession planning and whether to transfer their mineral interests to their descendants or to sell the mineral interests.

Laird advises families on the various methods available to them to transfer their mineral interests to their descendants, whether it be in trust, in a family-controlled entity, as outright gifts, and/or sales, and the income, estate, and transfer tax implications of the various options. He works with successive generations to educate them on their inherited mineral interests, understand the myriad of documents involved, and how to manage the mineral interests on their own. Laird helps owners:

- Understand the tax implications of owning, selling, and transferring their mineral interests.
- Review division orders, transfer agreements, and other documents impacting their mineral interests.
- Negotiate the lease and sale of their mineral interests.
- Understand the history of their mineral interests and establish systems and procedures for managing this information.
- Resolve disputes with lessors and royalty payors as to the calculation and payment of royalties owed, permitted deductions, mineral interest percentages owned, and other matters.

SIGNIFICANT REPRESENTATIONS

- Represented a family holding company in managing mineral and royalty interests in Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada, and Colorado, North Dakota, and Wyoming, including tracking lease transfers, mineral interests, and royalties owed, royalty interest calculations, and collections. He currently represents this client in litigation against a publicly-held Canadian oil and gas company for refusal to pay royalties on oil production.
- Represented a family in the generational transfer of mineral interests outside of Colorado, including estate and income tax planning, reporting, and negotiations associated with division and transfer orders and leases; educating heirs about mineral interests, leases, royalty calculations, revenue tracking, division orders, and online resources; and enabling heirs to manage the mineral interests on their own.
- Represented a personal representative in the appraisal and transfer of mineral interests in Colorado, Utah, Kansas, and Ohio, involving multiple generations of mineral interest transfers. Assisted clients in navigating beneficiary disputes managing mineral interest transfers, and communicating with payors, lessees, operators, and local taxing authorities.
- Represented personal representatives with the transfer of mineral interests pursuant to wills and trusts, including petitions to determine heirship of mineral interests not transferred out of the estates of multiple deceased ancestors.

EXPERIENCE – CORPORATE

Laird advises businesses and business owners on a wide variety of corporate and legal issues facing them today. These corporate matters range from advising on business structure to governance, contracts, and operations. He coordinates efforts among accountants, financial advisors, attorneys, insurance representatives, and other professional service providers working on behalf of the client to design lasting solutions. Laird’s background in tax enables him to better advise clients on the tax and corporate implications of their business decisions.

SIGNIFICANT REPRESENTATIONS

- Representation of independent directors of publicly traded company in a spin-off and merger transaction.
- Representation of Broker Dealer in NASD Arbitration.

- Representation of Internet Service Provider in various asset acquisitions and mergers.
- Representation of a Colorado resident in the purchase of a Helicopter Pilot Training school in Hawaii including communications and negotiations with the FAA, INS, and local Hawaiian airport authority.
- Representation of a family owned auto body repair shop to a national consolidator, including negotiation with the SBA for the release of the company from a small business loan.

HONORS & DISTINCTIONS

- Best Lawyers in America® – Trusts and Estates, 2026, 2027
- Denver Business Journal “Top 40 Under 40”
- University of Denver Law Review, Articles Editor
- American Jurisprudence Award – Administrative Law

PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

- Colorado Bar Association
- Denver Bar Association
- American Bar Association
- CK Catholic Education Foundation, Board of Trustees, 2009-2018
- The Design Council, Board of Directors 2004-2006
- Paragon Theatre Co., Chair, 2006-2008; Board of Directors, 2002-2012
- CultureHaus, Co-Chair, 1999-2001; Board of Directors, 1999-2003
- Children’s Hospital Foundation – Corporate Committee, 2001 & 2002
- Colorado Business Committee for the Arts, Leadership Arts Program, 2000-2001
- Great Art for a Great City Committee, Member, 1999

PRACTICE AREAS

Business & Corporate

Natural Resources

Taxation

Trusts & Estates

BADGES

