



Baker Botts, LLP

[Adam Feder]

Baker Botts, LLP, has been in business since 1840, making it the oldest law firm in Texas. Its founding actually predates Texas' becoming a state. Not only is Baker Botts the oldest, but it is the top-ranked firm in the state (and 43rd nationally), as judged by The Vault Guide to the Top 100 Law Firms in 2003.

The Houston office serves as the flagship for eight others around the world. Domestically, there is the Texas triumvirate (Houston, Dallas, and Austin), an office in New York, and one in Washington, DC. London, Moscow, and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, also host Baker Botts offices. The final location is in Baku, Azerbaijan. At first glance, this may seem like an obscure place for a law firm, but a closer look at its connection with Texas reveals its *raison d'être*. Azerbaijan is an oil-rich country on the shores of the Caspian Sea situated south of Russia, north of Iran, and east of Turkey. Baku is the capital of and largest city in Azerbaijan. Its main industry is the refining of oil, hence its proximity to the petroleum fields near the Iran border. Baker Botts represents major energy companies such as Exxon, Marathon Oil, and Halliburton (remember ex-CEO Dick Cheney?). By having an office in this oil-rich area, the firm is better able to respond to "situations" and thus serve its clients in an expedient manner. Further proof of its oil interests is evidenced by the firm's representation of Pennzoil-Quaker State when it was bought by Shell Oil in 2002 for \$1.8 billion.

The firm is also actively involved in the high-tech industry. Among its clients are Dell, EDS, and Affiliated Computer Services. The entertainment industry provides another arena for Baker Botts to show its strength. The firm had a hand in launching the Yankees Entertainment and Sports (YES) cable television network, which broadcasts home games for various local professional sports franchises, in 2002. That same year, it advised the USA Network on the sale of its entertain-

ment division in a deal worth \$10.3 billion. Baker Botts is obviously a major player in many fields of business.

The firm also has strong political ties to the Bush family and was one of the major financial backers of George W. Bush's 2000 presidential campaign. In what might have been seen as a conflict of interest, Baker Botts was actively engaged in the legal wrangling that followed the disputed 2000 election. Upon seizing the presidency, Bush assigned more than a few of the firm's partners to posts on his staff.

On a philanthropic note, Baker Botts was awarded the 2003 National Public Service Award. This distinguished it as a firm that provides pro bono legal assistance to nonprofits connected with disadvantaged communities. Some of these organizations are Justice for Children and Texas Rural Legal Aid. The firm remains committed to pro bono work, even though it doesn't toot its own horn.

Law students looking to gain employment at Baker Botts should have some kind of Texas connection to ease their way in. The firm looks for potential associates at top-15 law schools but will make exceptions for those who graduated in the top 15% from a Texas law school. There is some aspect of cronyism at work here, but a firm as powerful as Baker Botts can hire whomever it wants for whatever reason.

Compensation, which is surprisingly not the highest in the area, is average. However, the

hours may be getting excessive. There is a push underway to raise the billable-hour requirement from 2,000 to 2,200. The partners at Baker Botts have reputations for being accessible and respectful. Minorities and women do not comprise much of the attorney pool at the firm, although the partners are actively trying to change that.

Baker Botts is a connected law firm which represents high-profile clients in cases that are front-page news. High profile translates to high pressure for the attorneys working on these matters; however, what separates this firm from the others is the prestige the Baker Botts name carries.