

GREATER LAS VEGAS EDITION | Vol. 2 No. 4

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MAGAZINE®



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Front Row – Deanna C. Brinkerhoff, J. Stephen Peek, Krystal J. Gallagher, David J. Freeman. Not Pictured : Bryan L. Wright, Edward M. Garcia, Gian A. Brown, Lars K. Evensen, Patrick J. Reilly, Sean D. Thueson and Soraya T. Aguirre.



# HOLLAND & HART LAS VEGAS

## A WELL-ROUNDED, FULL-SERVICE LAW FIRM

By Vicki Hogue-Davies

“We expect our attorneys to perform at the highest levels in addition to leading full and well-rounded lives,” says Greg Gilbert, administrative partner of Holland & Hart’s Las Vegas office. “We value innovation, intelligence, involvement in the community, positive energy and dedication to the profession.”

Holland & Hart was founded in 1947 and has 15 locations throughout the Mountain West and in Washington D.C. Altogether, the firm employs more than 440 attorneys.

“The firm is a strong, full-service firm built on an impressive

foundation of practice areas including natural resources, energy, project development, intellectual property, real estate, banking finance and litigation,” Gilbert says. “Plus, the firm’s culture differentiates it from all other firms—it is truly unique.”

Gilbert and Phil Dabney established Holland & Hart’s Nevada offices in September 2006. Their goal was to find a multidisciplinary firm to fit their clients’ diverse needs that also meshed with their approach to the practice. Gilbert’s practice focuses on project development and implementation, construction and transportation. “My practice has evolved to

include many areas,” he says. “I started as a trial lawyer arguing about contract interpretation, commercial terms and liability issues. I represent owners, contractors, design professionals, governmental agencies and businesses. It didn’t take long for clients to start asking me to review transactional documents and projects to assess risk on the front end and throughout a project’s implementation. Today, I’m fortunate to represent clients through trial in addition to having a full transactional practice.”

“Phil and I set the bar extremely high when looking at all the available opportunities,” Gilbert says. “You also have to remember that in 2006 many firms around the country were contemplating starting an office in Nevada. We wanted something worth our investment and something different from the usual suspects. We started looking around, but couldn’t find a firm that fit our personalities and suited our overall goals. Holland & Hart had an incredible reputation, but they weren’t actively looking to open a Nevada office. We immediately wondered what the firm’s problem was and called the firm’s managing partner, Larry Wolfe, to get an answer. He told us they couldn’t find people that fit the firm’s overall approach to the profession. After getting to know Larry, Paul Phillips, Ed Flitton and a laundry list of truly incredible people we knew it was going to work well.”

A year later, in 2007, Gilbert opened an office in Reno and added Bob Ryan. “Bob Ryan is without question, one of the most talented patent attorneys you will ever meet,” Gilbert says. “He is also an outdoorsman and can catch fish with a string and hook made from a paper clip.”

Holland & Hart’s Las Vegas roster grew further when Brad Boodt came onboard with a banking finance practice. “Brad is a fantastic attorney as well as a great practice group leader,” Gilbert says. “Brad brings an unmatched level of consistency and tenacity to his team.”

Holland & Hart expanded in Las Vegas and Northern Nevada by combining forces with Hale Lane Peek Dennison & Howard in 2008. “Being one of the biggest law firms is not our goal,”

Gilbert says. “We combined with Hale Lane because the firm was filled with talented attorneys who have a rich history of practicing in Nevada. It was a no-brainer. In Las Vegas alone, we added Steve Peek, Pat Reilly and a team of trial attorneys who are loved, hated, respected and well known throughout the Nevada court system. As Steve might say, ‘not everyone is going to like a knowledgeable and experienced trial attorney— sometimes, that’s how you know you are doing your job.’”

In 2012, the firm added the governmental affairs practice of Ed Garcia and the healthcare practices of Connie Akridge and Matt Milone, enabling additional services for clients.

“Ed Garcia is a well-known government affairs attorney who assists clients in navigating ever-changing political waters and provides full-scale strategies for short-term and long-term client goals,” Gilbert says. “Ed is to government affairs what Rosetta Stone is to learning a foreign language. And I can’t say enough about Connie and Matt. They are dynamic health care attorneys practicing at a time when it is actually popular to be a health care attorney. Connie and Matt actually understand the nuisances of the Affordable Care Act and are assisting clients as they plan for its imminent application to their day-to-day lives.”

Today, Holland & Hart has more than 60 attorneys practicing throughout Nevada representing local, regional, national and international clients. “The bottom line is that we have a motivated group of excellent attorneys running on all cylinders and taking pride in what they do,” Gilbert says. “I feel like we are just getting started.”



Holland & Hart Las Vegas Office

## OPERATING PHILOSOPHY

The well-known adage “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” describes Holland & Hart’s operating style. The firm functions on a practice group basis across all of its 15 locations, so skill sets are as important as where attorneys physically sit, Gilbert emphasizes.

“You can’t really talk about the Las Vegas office without discussing our other offices,” Gilbert says. “Our firm uses a practice group approach based upon disciplines and expertise. For example, a client may need a construction lawyer to review an agreement that relates to a financing arrangement. It is very easy for the lead project finance attorney to call a construction attorney, real estate attorney, governmental affairs attorney or environmental attorney for a quick consult so the client gets the best advice. The key is to make sure the right attorneys are supporting the client.”

He adds that in today’s world it is the client that drives the way law firms provide services and notes that this was not always the case.

“For decades law firms and the legal industry provided services from a law-firm-centric perspective,” he says. “Those days ended at least 10 years ago. One reason our firm has thrived is because we got the message and were not afraid to adapt. We tailor our services to fit client needs, whether they are large international companies or local businesses. It doesn’t matter whether clients want an alternative fee approach or a specific staffing plan; we learned a long time ago that we should be assisting our clients in devising plans for legal services. Refusing to listen to client needs will result in a practice that ends up in a tar pit with its attorneys talking about the good old days—we prefer to be nostalgic about other things.

“Our clients measure the value of our services,” he continues. “We find effective and efficient legal services are provided when we know our clients’ needs and use teamwork. In short, our client’s get value when we share our collective intelligence as opposed to acting as silos. Let’s be clear, teamwork doesn’t mean we throw 10 lawyers at everything, we just believe in intelligent staffing and encouraging communication. The wrong attorney can spend 20 hours on a project in comparison to the right attorney spending 30 minutes.”

That sense of support inherent in the firm’s culture is one of the things that Gilbert most enjoys about working at Holland & Hart. “I get to shape my own career each day,” he says. “This is a commonly shared sentiment. We support our attorneys’ goals to become distinguished in their respective practice areas and look at the practice as a long-term proposition.”

## COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

In addition to a full-time practice, Gilbert oversees a wide array of office management issues. His style for managing the Las Vegas office, like the firm’s style overall, is consensus driven. “Everybody’s input is important, whether it’s the receptionist’s or the most senior partner in the firm,” he says. “Everybody can be involved if they choose.

“When visitors come to our office, or any of our firm’s offices for that matter, they probably won’t believe it’s a law firm,” he continues. “We got tired of hearing how law firms had ‘open door policies’ and decided to install glass doors instead. We are also fortunate to have Pat Reilly, who in addition to being a fantastic trial attorney is also a masterful photographer. His artwork is strewn throughout our office. We are a diverse crew, but have many common characteristics that bind us together.

“We take pride in our culture and it is jealously guarded,” he adds.

To ensure that the office culture remains friendly and collegial, Gilbert looks for several qualities in new-hires. In addition to intelligence, he expects a sense of humor, a blue-collar mentality, the ability to be honest with clients and a positive attitude. “The job is hard enough, so it is good to avoid being around people who are consistently negative,” he says.

Over the years, many of Gilbert’s clients have shaped and impacted his views on the qualities important to the firm. He recalls one client and friend saying when they first met: “I don’t know’ is a great answer to a question. We can figure out the options as long as we properly identify the problem first.”

“So I guess the last quality we look for is humility,” Gilbert says.

To keep the office running smoothly, Gilbert relies on the critical skills of full-time office administrator Jill Vukasin and her support staff.

“Jill’s job is to run the core daily administrative functions,” he says. “Jill has a great staff that helps with everything from human resources to event planning and all of the ‘nits and pics’ required for operations. It isn’t a glamorous job, but it is vital to our success.”

## WELL-ROUNDED FIRM

“We pride ourselves on being ‘lawyers lawyers,’ but we are also people who dedicate time to our community,” Gilbert says.

Holland & Hart has ranked in the top five on The American Lawyer’s Pro Bono Scorecard for its professional pro bono activities. Its dedication to community is so strong that all of its attorneys are required to give at least 100 hours of their time to



Lance C. Earl, Jenny L. Routheaux, Bradley N. Boodt



Deanna C. Brinkerhoff, Robert J. Cassity, Krystal J. Gallagher, Brian G. Anderson



Leslie M. Nino, Constance L. Akridge, Melissa A. Beutler, Michael W. Wadley



Gregory S. Gilbert and Constance L. Akridge

professional pro bono activities and community service work. In 1998, the firm also started the nonprofit Holland & Hart Foundation to give back to their communities. The foundation seeks to weave communities together through charitable works. To celebrate the foundation's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, each of the 15 Holland & Hart offices chose a charitable organization to support through volunteerism and donations. The Las Vegas office is supporting the Las Vegas Rescue Mission, which provides assistance to the homeless and others in need. The Reno and Carson City offices are helping The Children's Cabinet and FISH (Friends in Service Helping).

The 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary work and donations are in addition to other causes that the Holland & Hart offices support through the foundation. Some of the other charitable endeavors of the Las Vegas office include supporting Shoes that Fit, which provides shoes for schoolchildren in need; Stockings for Soldiers, supplying stockings filled with food, personal thank you notes to soldiers and other items for active duty service members overseas; and Junior Achievement, in which attorneys and staff teach classes in financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship to local elementary school children. The Holland & Hart firm also holds an annual food-drive competition across its locations to encourage community service and giving.

While one of the firm's strongest values is investing in communities, attorneys are also expected to invest in themselves. The firm's partners self-fund a sabbatical program and every partner at Holland & Hart is encouraged, if not required, to take a three-month sabbatical every five years.

"The sabbatical is a special component of our firm," Gilbert says. "Who doesn't want summer vacation as an adult? Get a Eurail pass and take your family to Europe, be a groupie and take your kids on tour with U2, build homes with Habitat for Humanity, learn Mandarin or write a book. It is your time to reconnect with your soul."

### POSITIONED FOR THE FUTURE

Staying profitable and stable can depend on many things, including the choices businesses make when times get tough. Holland & Hart successfully navigated through the murky waters of the recession of 2008 and 2009 when many firms didn't, Gilbert points out.

"There were layoffs at law firms throughout the country that were unimaginable," he says. "Law firms in general today are still under immense pressure because the economy is so unpredictable. It is easy to give up things along the way to keep afloat. Our law

firm made the decision to keep our people together and not lay anyone off, not just in the Las Vegas office, but throughout the entire firm.

“To the degree there was a financial impact to the firm, which there was, the partners decided they would pay for it,” he says. “We put our firm health first as opposed to partner profits. That decision was not only the right thing to do; it worked out to be a good business decision.”

He adds that the firm separates the “practice of law” from “the business of law.”

“We have professionals dedicated specifically to making sure we operate as a profitable and stable business,” Gilbert says. “We do this so lawyers can represent clients, and our firm executives can focus on the health of the business. In addition to hard work, I believe this was the primary reason our firm continued to grow and prosper through the recession. We had an internal business strategy that kept us from being over-leveraged, top heavy and too dependent upon one client base.”

What does he believe the future holds for the firm?

“I expect our Las Vegas and Northern Nevada offices will continue to grow along with our communities,” he says. “I’m confident in our firm’s strategic plan and well-rounded philosophy. Our unique qualities and dedication to the profession are the keys to our firm’s success . . . no matter how confusing the business and political climate might be.”

Gregory S. Gilbert



## At A Glance

### Holland & Hart, Las Vegas

9555 Hillwood Drive, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Las Vegas, NV 89134  
(702) 669-4600  
[www.hollandandhart.com](http://www.hollandandhart.com)

### Founded in 2006

### OTHER LOCATIONS:

14 other locations throughout the Mountain West and Washington D.C.

### PRACTICE AREAS:

- Banking and Financial Institutions
- Business, Corporate and Finance
- Energy, Environment and Natural Resources
- Government
- Health Care
- Intellectual Property
- International
- Labor and Employment
- Real Estate and Construction
- Tax, Benefits and Private Client
- Transportation

### ADMINISTRATIVE PARTNER:

*Gregory S. Gilbert*

### EDUCATION:

- J.D., University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, 1997
- B.A., University of Santa Barbara, 1991

### PROFESSIONAL AWARDS:

Leading Attorney, Nevada Super Lawyers

**Partners: 14**

**Associates: 14**

**Paralegals: 5**