

David Bradley Olsen

HENSON & EFRON



David Bradley Olsen enjoys a good fight in court over business and commercial litigation, but when he gets the opportunity to make a difference in individuals' lives, he jumps at the chance. He recently made a huge difference for 18,000 personal care attendants who support family members by fighting a new Minnesota law that paid relative caregivers 20 percent less than nonfamily members.

When a district court refused to declare the pay cut unconstitutional, Olsen successfully appealed to the Minnesota Court of Appeals. Representing eight home care agencies and nine relative caregivers, Olsen argued that the law treated similar groups with identical training differently, only because they were patients' relatives.

"We put a lot of hours into this, interpreting the U.S. and Minnesota constitutions, and we found a lot of support in the case law that you can't balance the budget on the back of poor people solely for arbitrary reasons," says Olsen. "We were representing people who don't have a political voice. But for the 20 percent difference in pay, they might not be able to take care of their relatives, who might then end up in an institution."

In another case of advocating for people without a political voice, Olsen represents Native Americans living on three reservations in Montana before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. He will argue this summer that they are being disenfranchised by state and county procedures surrounding early and absentee voting; Olsen will request satellite voting offices on the reservations as a remedy.

"Native Americans living on reservations didn't have the right to vote until 1948, so it's personally satisfying to stand up for people who have been historically disenfranchised," says Olsen, who is working on the case pro bono.

A huge hockey fan, player and referee, Olsen is scrappy on the ice and in court, defending corporate clients and pursuing their interests in state and federal venues. Olsen also represents entertainers and athletes, including former Gov. Jesse Ventura and wrestler and mixed martial arts competitor Brock Lesnar. During his 25-year career, Olsen has built a reputation as an aggressive but reasoned attorney who clients hire for bet-the-business litigation.

— Suzy Frisch

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