

Robert L. Palmer

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DES MOINES OFFICE

High stakes and active work at the Iowa State Capitol captivated Robert L. Palmer from the beginning. "I knew from the second I walked in the building that it was a high-energy, unique environment, and it was an environment I would like," Robert says. "The issues are important, and the impacts are real."

Practicing in government affairs, Robert assists clients with their needs at the Iowa Legislature, the governor's office, and anywhere that government touches. He works for clients at the local, state, and federal level. "I'm a true believer," he says. "I look at government as a social experiment we're all working through together. Collaboration in the policy space is why we have food, water, medicine, infrastructure, and so many other things that are easy to take for granted. It's about doing more together than we would be able to on our own."

At the Iowa League of Cities, Robert handled a broad array of public policy issues including economic development, utilities, zoning, and taxation. "It takes a lot of work to balance 870 members' needs and a variety of policy issues—you never have enough time," he says. "I learned how to juggle a variety of issues and balance a variety of needs."

Robert has real respect for local officials and their efforts. "Local elected officials are in their communities every day trying to make a difference," he says. Robert takes their dedication to heart, putting the same effort into achieving client goals.

Trustworthiness and hard work are two keys to his approach. "Honesty must be at the core of public policy work," Robert says. "I want to be known as the subject matter expert who works hard. That's what I want my clients to think about me because that's the type of person I'd want representing me."

In his work, Robert clearly communicates his clients' views in ways elected officials can understand. "It's about relationships and meeting policy leaders where they are," he says. "It's about understanding people, what they want, and what drives them."

Working with legislators and other government officials, Robert knows achieving the client's goals means developing a shared perspective. "People differ," he says. "They have personal, professional, and familial interests. Each issue has to be viewed through all those different lenses."



PRACTICE AREAS

- Government Affairs
- Administrative Rulemaking
- Bill Drafting
- Campaign Finance & Elections
- Legislation Tracking & Analysis
- Lobbying
- Strategic Planning

EDUCATION

- Drake University (B.A., Law, Politics & Society)
- Drake Law School (J.D.)
- Certified Association Executive

BAR ADMISSIONS

- Iowa

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- General Counsel and Director of Government Affairs, Legislative Counsel, Government Affairs Manager; Iowa League of Cities
- Legal and Legislative Apprentice, Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Legislative Apprentice for Rep. Mary Gaskill, Iowa House of Representatives

Then, he conveys the pertinent message in a way the legislator can understand. “We all think about how we want to deliver a message, but we need to think about how the receiver receives that message.” That, Robert says, is the way to help legislators and others develop an understanding of an issue.

Also, Robert has a keen interest in helping associations achieve their goals. “I became a Certified Association Executive to understand how you effectively operate an association and how you engage with members,” he says. “I look at an association and see the members, what they desire, and why they came together. From that perspective, we can provide guidance to them on a broader array of things and help represent and administer associations in a way that others may not be able to.”

For Robert, being an active citizen is a driving passion. It’s why he earned a place on the Chicago Federal Reserve’s Community & Economic Development Advisory Committee. One point in Robert’s application: “Iowa is the only state that is entirely in the Chicago Federal Reserve territory. We’ve got a massive agricultural economy and many, many small cities, and if you don’t have somebody from Iowa, you’re missing out.” Besides sharing insights from Iowa business and government leaders, Robert also brought the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago to Des Moines. During the visit, Robert moderated a meeting with top business leaders and a public economic update.

Robert also has a strong commitment to West Des Moines, where he lives with his wife, Kelly, and three boys. He strives to make sure they see the impact of community leadership. In addition to serving on the West Des Moines Chamber board of directors and as president of the West Des Moines Community Foundation, Robert is often integral to fundraising efforts for community amenities. “I believe in giving back,” he says. “I’m there when the mayor, council, or manager calls. I love that city, and I have a pretty significant nexus to it. I try to do what I can as a citizen.”

RECOGNITION

Des Moines Business Record Forty Under 40

Honoree, 2019

West Des Moines Leadership Academy, Class of 2016

Drake Alumni Executive Round Table, 2015

National Civility Summit for Local Governments, Co-Founder

PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Iowa Bar Association

Iowa Municipal Attorneys Association

International Municipal Lawyers Association

Iowa Society of Association Executives

Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago

- Community & Economic Development Advisory Council

Board of Physical and Occupational Therapy, State of Iowa (past)

- Served eight years, appointed by Governors Branstad and Reynolds, confirmed by Iowa Senate

Iowa Society of Association Executives

- Vice President

Drake University College of Arts & Sciences National Advisory Council

- Chair

Drake Law Recent Alumni Advisory Board (past)

West Des Moines Community Foundation

- President

West Des Moines Leadership Advisory Board

West Des Moines Raccoon River Bridge Campaign Advisory Council (past)

West Des Moines Arboretum Legacy Woods Nature Sanctuary Advisory Committee

SPEECHES AND PUBLICATIONS

"Economic Update with Chicago Federal Reserve Chair Charles Evans"

Invited, coordinated, and hosted Chicago Federal Reserve president with Drake University and the Greater Des Moines Partnership.

"Civility in Politics"

Co-established and moderated a panel with a former Congressman, a state legislator, and Drake professors with the Drake Law Recent Alumni Engagement Board.

"Public Policy Issue Forum on Infrastructure"

Hosted by the Greater Des Moines Partnership.