

PRESS RELEASE

Baker Donelson Launches Charlotte Office, Expands Foothold in Carolinas with Addition of Eight Shareholders

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Baker Donelson continues to broaden its presence in the Carolinas with the launch of a Charlotte, North Carolina, office and the addition of eight new shareholders. This marks the Firm's third new location in the Carolinas in less than three years.

Joining the Firm as shareholders are John E. Branch III, Elizabeth Haskins, Thomas G. Hooper, Paul J. Osowski, Evan M. Sauda, William M. Starr, Fred M. Wood Jr., and Noelle E. Wooten.

Mr. Wood will serve as managing shareholder of the new Charlotte office, where he will be joined by Mr. Hooper, Mr. Osowski, Mr. Sauda, Mr. Starr, and Ms. Wooten. Mr. Branch will be based in Baker Donelson's Raleigh office, while Ms. Haskins will be based in the Charleston, South Carolina, office. All eight attorneys were previously partners with the firm of Nelson Mullins.

Beyond growing Baker Donelson's presence in the Carolinas, this move also marks an expansion of the Firm's environmental practice with the addition of Ms. Wooten and Ms. Haskins, who bring significant experience in environmental litigation and regulatory matters.

Baker Donelson Chair and CEO [Timothy M. Lupinacci](#) said, "We are really excited about this new group joining our Firm. The Carolinas have been an area of focus for growth for Baker Donelson and will continue to be, given the legal talent and thriving market in the region. We continue to execute on our BakerVision2028 strategic plan focused on our clients, our people, and our firm, and the addition of this incredible group is further evidence of Baker Donelson's positive growth trajectory."

The Firm's Chief Growth Officer [Mark A.B. Carlson](#) added, "Our goal is to continue to add outstanding legal talent in the Southeast's growth markets, such as the Carolinas and other vibrant markets elsewhere. This group exemplifies the type of stellar attorneys we are striving to bring on board."

Baker Donelson launched its first North Carolina location in October 2021 with the addition of five attorneys in Raleigh/Research Triangle. In September 2022, four South Carolina shareholders joined to form the Charleston office. The Firm has maintained a location in Columbia, South Carolina, since 2016. With the addition of these eight shareholders, Baker Donelson now has more than 30 attorneys across the Carolinas.

"My colleagues and I are thrilled to be part of Baker Donelson's collaborative culture and industry-leading practices," said Mr. Wood. "The Firm's commitment to growth, teamwork, and the Carolinas offers our clients the expanded resources of a national firm."

[Mr. Wood](#) represents companies in a variety of matters, including cases involving unfair business practices and methods of competition, the North Carolina Trade Secrets Protection Act, business torts, and class actions. He has experience in securing and defending against Temporary Restraining Orders, Preliminary Injunctions and Permanent Injunctions, and he has represented companies, partnerships, and individuals in shareholder and partnership disputes and oppression claims by minority shareholders. In his financial services litigation practice, Mr. Wood has represented banks, financial institutions, investment advisors, and other professional

services firms in matters that include securities lending and litigation, professional liability, antitrust, breach of fiduciary duty, transactional, and contractual disputes.

Mr. Branch concentrates his practice in complex business, employment, and constitutional law. He regularly advises clients on business matters and disputes involving contracts, shareholder and LLC member issues, fraud, unfair competition, defamation, and other business-related claims. He also counsels and advocates for clients in all aspects of employment law. Mr. Branch has appeared in practically all levels of state and federal courts in North Carolina and has appeared in state or federal courts in South Carolina, Ohio, Louisiana, Iowa, Maine, and Colorado. He also counsels and advocates for clients in constitutional and political law issues, as well as in charter school and other school choice and educational matters.

Ms. Haskins practices environmental law. She helps companies manage environmental risk and provides regulatory and litigation services for a range of environmental issues. Her experience includes representing clients in environmental regulatory compliance and litigation matters with a focus on Clean Water Act issues, including wetlands, stormwater, riparian buffer, and coastal zone management concerns. She also provides state and local permitting and land use advice to project developers and environmental due diligence on transactional matters, including brownfield developments.

Mr. Hooper focuses on complex business and commercial litigation and consumer and commercial financial services litigation, and he has represented clients in state and federal trial and appellate courts and in arbitration. His experience includes representing financial institutions in cases involving federal statutes and regulations and state common-law and statutory claims, as well as representing lenders in connection with commercial and consumer non-judicial foreclosure proceedings and in multimillion-dollar actions to recover on secured and unsecured commercial notes and guaranties. He has also represented insurance companies in litigation concerning coverage under commercial general liability, life, and title insurance policies, and partners and joint venturers in partnership and venture litigation and arbitration.

Mr. Osowski is a litigator with a practice spanning product liability, business litigation, premises liability, and insurance defense. He brings more than two decades of experience representing automotive and consumer product manufacturers. Over the course of his career, Mr. Osowski has conducted more than 100 investigations involving heavy equipment, automobile, trucking, and workplace accidents and has provided counsel for matters related to catastrophic personal injuries and fatalities. He has assisted clients with numerous OSHA investigations arising out of workplace accidents, served as North Carolina counsel for a national heavy equipment rental company for matters related to catastrophic personal injuries and fatalities, and served as regional counsel for a large pharmaceutical company in mass tort litigation.

Mr. Sauda assists clients in litigating complex business disputes, including commercial contracts litigation, class action defense, franchise and distribution matters, real estate issues, and defense of claims brought under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other statutes. He routinely appears in state and federal courts and handles binding arbitrations, both before the American Arbitration Association and other quasi-judicial bodies. He has brought cases to verdict before juries, judges, and arbitrators and has handled appeals in North Carolina's appellate courts and in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Mr. Sauda also counsels clients on all aspects of the franchise relationship and assists clients in designing and continuously improving their strategies and processes.

Mr. Starr practices in the litigation fields of aviation, premises liability, toxic torts, and product liability. He devotes a significant part of his practice to aviation law. Mr. Starr's experience includes handling litigation matters for international and domestic air carriers, including personal injury claims, commercial disputes, and Montreal/Warsaw Convention claims; representing general aviation facilities, certified repair stations, and fixed base operators in commercial disputes and claims relating to maintenance of general aviation aircraft; and

representing manufacturers of products including automobiles, aircraft, industrial equipment, food, and child restraints in matters pending in the Southeast and elsewhere in the United States.

Ms. Wooten has significant experience in several areas of environment law, including environmental litigation, environmental due diligence, risk assessment and negotiation strategies in real estate transactions, and environmental compliance and regulatory counseling in matters involving hazardous substances, waste management, chemical control, retail product management, and drug packaging. Ms. Wooten applies her technical background, prior experience at the Environmental Protection Agency, and more than 30 years of practice to assist clients with litigation matters involving complex toxic tort issues, private party disputes, and administrative penalty matters. Ms. Wooten enjoys bringing creative solutions to environmental challenges to facilitate business transactions and brownfield redevelopment projects. She is also a trained mediator.