

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - September 12, 2005
<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2005/09/12/story3.html>



BUSINESS PULSE SURVEY: [Should the Wisconsin Legislature pass a statewide smoking ban?](#)

Godfrey & Kahn to open office in Shanghai

Law firm becomes first in Milwaukee to expand to China

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - September 9, 2005 by [Pete Millard](#)

Following the lead of its largest manufacturing clients, Godfrey & Kahn is the first Milwaukee law firm to open an office in China.

Godfrey & Kahn plans to set up shop in Shanghai before the end of September after a six-month licensing process, said Christopher Noyes, a Godfrey & Kahn partner who works with international business clients.

Godfrey & Kahn's China office will have one attorney at the outset. Noyes hopes to add up to three lawyers in the next two years.

Angie Rogers, who moved to Shanghai in 2003 with her husband, Jeff Albright, is Godfrey & Kahn's chief representative in China. She previously worked in the law firm's Milwaukee office. Rogers moved to China when her husband was transferred there by Briggs & Stratton Corp., Wauwatosa.

"The legal industry is highly restricted in China," Rogers said. "It's much easier for manufacturers to open offices."

In contrast, when Harley-Davidson Inc., Milwaukee, opened an office in China in 2004, it took two months to gain approval from the government regulatory agencies in Beijing, said Mark Witt, a Godfrey & Kahn attorney who works with Noyes and Rogers in the corporate area.

"The ease of entry hinges on the type of capital investment China wants," Witt said. "High-tech and manufacturing firms have an easier time getting licensed than law firms."

In the past, when Godfrey & Kahn had clients with legal issues in China, the firm would refer them to a Chinese law firm that belongs to the international law alliance called Terra Lex, said Noyes.

"Having our own lawyer on the ground in China is more useful," said Noyes.

Godfrey & Kahn has worked on opening a China office for more than a year, said Noyes. The firm hired Rogers in February. She began filing applications with the Chinese government in April with the help of Shanghai's Allbright Law Firm.

Noyes would not disclose the amount the firm has spent to establish the office.

Expanding business

John Torinus, chief executive officer of Serigraph Inc., a West Bend printing company and a Godfrey & Kahn client, said he encouraged the firm "to go over there because it expands their business with us."

Until recently, Serigraph worked with Armstrong Teasdale, a St. Louis law firm, on legal issues arising in China.

In addition to Serigraph, Godfrey & Kahn Milwaukee clients doing business in China include A.O. Smith Corp., Milwaukee, and Rexnord Corp., West Milwaukee.

Godfrey & Kahn is also working with Robert W. Baird & Co. Inc., Milwaukee, and Stark Investments, St. Francis, to attract Chinese venture capital to Wisconsin.

"Opening the Chinese office is a defensive move for Godfrey & Kahn that helps them keep clients," said Peter Beitzel, a vice president of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce who specializes in international trade.

MMAC president Tim Sheehy, is leading a trade mission to China that will leave Sept. 14. Members of the MMAC mission plan to meet with Godfrey & Kahn's Rogers in Shanghai.

Witt will travel to China Oct. 14 with a trade mission led by Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. Godfrey & Kahn's Noyes also plans to spend a week in China at the end of October on client business.

Godfrey & Kahn, the fifth-largest law firm in Milwaukee, has more than 180 attorneys in offices throughout the state -- Milwaukee, Appleton, Green Bay, Madison and Waukesha. In Madison, the office is known as LaFollette Godfrey & Kahn.

While Godfrey & Kahn is the first Milwaukee firm to open an office in China, several have ties to China. Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek formed a strategic alliance with Lehman, Lee & Xu in 2004 to help clients set up operations in China and to attract venture capital.

Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren S.C. also has an alliance with a Chinese law firm. Dan Brink, a

Reinhart international law partner, traveled to China nine times in the past year.

Milwaukee-based Foley & Lardner, the state's largest law firm, has had a China practice for 15 years.

However, the firm does not have a China-based office, and has developed multiple relationships with local Chinese law firms, said Julie Lee, a Foley lawyer in Milwaukee, who is a Chinese national and oversees the firm's China practice.

"We believe opening an office in China is not the most effective way to serve the China needs of our clients," said Lee, who is a graduate of Beijing University and Northwestern University law school.

Lee said Foley plans to expand its China base before the end of 2005 by forming a "joint-venture type of arrangement" with a Chinese law firm.

[Contact the Editor](#) [Need Assistance?](#) [More Latest News →](#)

[Subscribe or renew online](#)

All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.