

LAW WEEK COLORADO

Lawyers *of the* Decade



CALL US CRAZY. *Law Week* recently set out to recognize a handful of Colorado lawyers as “Lawyers of the Decade,” a fool’s errand, given the plethora of high-quality candidates to be considered. But we had help. After we gathered dozens of nominations from *Law Week* readers, we were aided by a selection panel that consisted of three current or past chairs of the Denver Bar Association’s Seniors Committee: **Don McMichael, Bob Fullerton and Jim Bayer.** McMichael practiced for many years as a trusts and estates lawyer. Fullerton, a former Denver District Court judge, received the DBA’s judicial excellence award in 1987. Bayer, a respected family law attorney, has practiced for decades with Bayer & Carey. With their help, and knowing that others could come up with a list of 10 different but equally deserving lawyers, we decided upon **Rich Baer, Michael Burg, Stacy Carpenter, Steve Farber, Cole Finegan, Jim Lyons, John Moye, Jim Mulligan, Michael O’Donnell and C. Jean Stewart.** Photo by **Jamie Cotten.**

Steve Farber

By **Matt Masich**
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DENVER—Barack Obama’s speech at the 2008 Democratic National Convention at Invesco Field at Mile High was an indelible moment in his historic presidential campaign, and it probably couldn’t have happened — at least not in Denver — without Steve Farber of Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck.

Farber used his deep Democratic political ties to snag the convention for Denver, and as co-chair of the host committee was responsible for gathering \$55 million of the \$60.9 million raised for the event.

“His role was imperative,” said co-chair Elbra Wedgeworth. “Without Steve, it really wouldn’t have happened.”

The convention was a major boost to Denver’s national profile, said Brownstein managing partner Bruce James.

“For a city that was launched onto a much bigger national platform, it’s as important an event as any other single event in the past decade,” James said.

Farber’s community involvement is legendary. He’s served on the boards of Rose Health Care Systems, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and the University of Denver, to name just a few.

“To my knowledge, there’s nobody else in the state of Colorado who has made the difference that he has made in so many major areas,” said Dan Ritchie, former DU chancellor.

“When I was at DU, he was elected to board of trustees there even though he was a CU graduate because we so respected his judgment.”

Farber’s commitment to the community has become a part of his firm’s culture. All Brownstein lawyers are encouraged to



join nonprofit boards or leadership teams, or otherwise participate in civic life. Business sometimes flows from the connections made there, but that’s just not the main point, James said.

Farber used a personal hardship as a springboard for service to others. In 2003, doctors told him he needed a kidney transplant. After a year searching for a donor, his son Gregg proved to be a match and donated one of his own. The experience led Farber write a book, *On the List: Fixing America’s Failing Organ*

Transplant System. He also founded the nonprofit American Transplant Foundation to raise awareness of organ donation.

With Farber’s political, civic and charitable contributions getting so much attention, his work as a lawyer is sometimes overlooked.

“He’s actually one of the most brilliant strategic lawyers from a pure legal standpoint,” James said.

He has a deft touch coming up with large-scale strategic solutions, but he still

delights in going over the small details. That’s often surprising to younger attorneys working on a deal with Farber for the first time.

“Say a draft of a document gets shared around, and maybe the lead younger partner comes in the next day they’re shocked that they have a marked-up document from Steve Farber,” James said. “Somehow they don’t expect Steve to be at that level of detail, but he still loves to get into the mix.” •

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