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LITIGATION  
*Boutique*  
OF THE YEAR

## Footnotes

For litigation boutiques, work spans the globe,  
and the docket ranges from union-side labor to high-stakes IP.

### WHERE DOES CITGO GO?

#### Eimer Stahl's Venezuelan connection

**IN 1988, WHEN NATHAN EIMER** was a rising star at Sidley Austin and CITGO Petroleum Corporation was half-owned by the operators of the 7-Eleven chain, Eimer worked on his first CITGO matter, an antitrust case.

A lot has changed in the 20 years since. Eimer is the founding partner of the Chicago litigation boutique **Eimer Stahl Klevorn & Solberg**, and CITGO is wholly owned by Venezuela's national oil company. But the refining giant is still fueling Eimer's career.

Since Eimer and nine others left Sidley to start Eimer Stahl in 2000, the boutique has built strong relationships with clients like Land O' Lakes, Inc., Honeywell International Inc. subsidiary UOP LLC, and Union Carbide Corporation. In July it added a Houston office, where its lawyers expect to collaborate on white-collar cases with local attorney Dick DeGuerin. But for now, CITGO dominates the 24-lawyer firm's docket.

Eimer doesn't downplay the firm's relationship with CITGO. "We're happy to be CITGO's law firm," says Eimer, who has been to Venezuela to meet state petroleum officials but hasn't yet run into President Hugo Chavez. Eimer Stahl takes the lead in handling all of CITGO's antitrust matters and most of its complex litigation. Since January

2007 its partners have:

- Continued to defend CITGO against MTBE groundwater contamination claims, including in a multidistrict litigation in the Southern District of New York;
- Won dismissal of claims that CITGO is liable for actions and statements made by President Chavez that led to boycotts of CITGO outlets in the United States;
- Defended CITGO in a criminal trial involving Clean Air Act violations alleged by the Environmental Crimes Section of the U.S. Department of Justice (CITGO was acquitted of some charges and convicted of others); and
- Won a favorable arbitration ruling after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita left CITGO unable to fulfill certain supply contracts.

Eimer Stahl also represents CITGO in a Texas MDL in which plaintiffs seek to hold the company liable for decisions made by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, and in other matters.

"Nate is the best attorney I've ever worked with," says CITGO assistant general counsel S. Jeffrey Bednar. "Regardless of the issue, if I have a big problem, he's the guy I call."

For Eimer Stahl, that's more than a compliment—it's a practice.

—DAVID BARIO