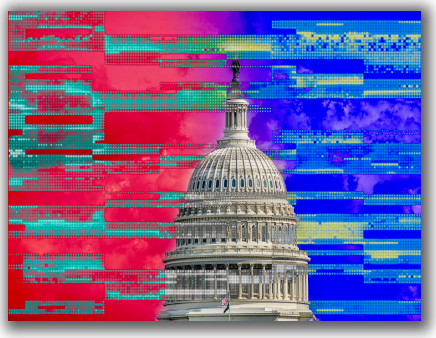
DrummondWoodsum 2021

Estate Planning Year in Review

January 2022



Contact Us

David J. Backer
207.253.0529
dbacker@dwmlaw.com

John S. Kaminski
207.253.0561
jkaminski@dwmlaw.com

Jessica M. Scherb
207.253.0574
jscherb@dwmlaw.com

David S. Sherman, Jr.
207.253.0519
dsherman@dwmlaw.com

Christopher G. Stevenson
207.253.0515
cstevenson@dwmlaw.com

Denae (Dee) Barton
207.253.0527
dbarton@dwmlaw.com

"The ballot is stronger than the bullet."

- Abraham Lincoln

When we wrote to you last year, we were happy to finally be bidding adieu to 2020. We were almost giddy tearing down those old calendars and dreaming of the promise of better days ahead. Little did we know when we wrote last year's *Estate Planning Year in Review* that the year would begin with an event that will likely mark our collective consciences with a calendar date to remember. The events of January 6, with a goal of disrupting the confirmation of our newly elected President, led to a year of indictments, prison sentences, subpoenas, and Congressional hearings that are far from over. And, objects of our attention in 2020 that we were hoping would be left behind in the new year continued to be our focus in 2021 - including masks and social distancing, and looming gift and estate tax changes.

Although the latter may not have been front and center on your radar, it certainly was on ours. We waited, with bated breath, for what the change of the calendar – or, more precisely, the change in control of the Senate and White House – would bring for our work and for our clients' estate planning. We realized partway through the year that we could exhale, at least a bit, when it became clear that whatever was going to happen would not happen retroactively to January 1, 2021. But, now here we are again, at the end of another year, waiting and wondering what changes lie ahead.

Unlike last year, when our *Estate Planning Year in Review* optimistically (and perhaps somewhat naively) sported a "movin' on" introduction, this year's theme is more aptly Yogi Berra's "It's déjà vu all over again."

Still Waiting

Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future.

- Neils Bohr, Danish physicist and Nobel Prize winner

Those of us who followed the on again, off again spending bills that snaked their way through Congress over the past year are suffering from a bit of whip lash. As 2020 drew to a close, we expected significant changes to the federal gift and estate tax regime. With Democrats in control of the White House and the House of Representatives after the November 2020 election (and, ultimately, the Senate, following the outcome of the January 5, 2021 Georgia run-off

elections, combined with Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking power), everyone in the estate planning and tax fields who had a betting bone in their body was betting that 2021 would see a drastic reduction of the federal gift and estate tax exemption, among other likely changes. But as you already know from this year's introduction, we all lost that bet.

One of the many Democratic proposals going into 2021 was a reduction of the gift and estate tax exemption from the $11.7 million amount that became effective on January 1, 2021. Proposals for the reduced exemption amount ranged from $3.5 million to $5.85 million. Fully expecting that the reduced exemption would be effective for all gifts and deaths occurring in 2021, those who were fortunate enough to have been able to take advantage of 2020's $11.58 million gift and estate tax exemption made substantial gifts of assets as 2020 drew to a close. Phew. Just in time. Or so they, and we, thought.

But, here we are again, writing this as the calendar turns from 2021 to 2022, in a nearly identical situation. Many people who did not make substantial gifts by the end of 2020 chose to do so before the end of 2021, convinced, once again, that the currently high federal gift and estate tax exemption amount will soon be reduced.

The failure of Congress to reduce the exemption amount is not, however, for lack of trying. The story of President Biden's "Build Back Better" agenda is reminiscent of the classic *Schoolhouse Rock!* video, *"How a Bill Becomes a Law"* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBpdxEMelR0. First aired in 1975 during Saturday morning cartoons, the video shows a cartoon "Bill" – a scroll of paper with a face, arms and legs – explaining to a young boy, in roughly 3 minutes, the complicated path a bill takes to becoming a law. At first in his recounting of the path he has taken, "Bill" is fresh and eager, explaining to the young boy how he started out as just an idea, optimistically singing that "I know I'll be a law someday, at least I hope and pray that I will."

As the story progresses, we see Bill, exhausted outside the closed Committee doors, listening with the young boy as legislators argue about him. He explains that even if he is passed by the House, and then by the Senate, he still needs the President's approval. If the President vetoes him, poor Bill has to "go back to Congress and they vote on me again, and by that time you're so old…," "it's very unlikely that you'll become a law," the young boy finishes for him.

In our version of the story, poor "Bill," insofar as he contained gift and estate tax changes, apparently became too old before even getting out of the House. And, similar to the Bill in the *Schoolhouse Rock!* video, the original "Bill" in our case was left as just a stripped down, "sad little scrap of paper," slumped over on the steps of the Capital Building.

The story of our bill began when President Biden proposed his "Build Back Better" agenda – the idea – ahead of his inauguration in January 2021. The "Build Back Better" bill itself was not introduced to the House until September 27. Although the public focus of the bill included a series of social safety net policies such as an expanded child tax credit, universal pre-K, paid family and medical leave, and expanded health care access, among others, it also contained a number of provisions that would have upended many estate plans. Initially, it was a $3.5 trillion package, and one (of many) ways to pay for it was with an increase in tax revenue resulting from changes to the gift and estate tax laws.

The key estate tax provisions included cutting the federal gift and estate tax exemption, from $11.7 million in 2021 to about $6 million effective for gifts made and decedents dying in 2022. The bill also included provisions that would have ended the estate tax benefits of certain irrevocable trusts.

Although a reduction by half of the federal gift and estate tax exemption can certainly have adverse consequences in many estate plans, most estate plans are designed with sufficient flexibility to account for fluctuations in the estate tax exemption. For example, one estate plan design that is used frequently to account for the uncertainty in the future amount of the gift and estate tax exemption is to include provisions for the use of "disclaimers," a wait-and-see approach to estate tax planning that allows a surviving spouse to determine, at the time of the deceased spouse's death, whether estate tax planning is appropriate based on asset values and exemption amounts at the time of the first death.

In addition to reducing the federal gift and estate tax exemption amount, the House bill would have eliminated the estate tax benefits of irrevocable "grantor trusts." Existing grantor trust tax laws allow the person who creates an irrevocable trust

(the "grantor"), and transfers assets to that trust, to have the assets of the trust escape inclusion in the grantor's taxable estate at death while still allowing the grantor to be treated as the owner of the trust for income tax purposes. Wait…to "allow" the grantor to be taxed on any income generated in the trust, when the grantor no longer owns the assets in the trust, is a good thing? Sometimes, yes.

Because the only certainties in life are death and taxes, after all, we know that someone is going to be taxed on the income generated and retained in a trust – the only questions are "who" and "how much". The first question has two possible answers: the grantor, or the trust itself. The answer to the second question depends upon the answer to the first. Although trust income tax rates follow individual income tax rates, trust tax brackets are greatly compressed. A trust reaches the highest income tax rate of 37% at only $13,451 of income for 2022. An individual taxpayer needs at least $539,901 of income to hit that same rate. For grantors who are establishing these trusts, the grantor is often in the same top bracket as the trust. Having the grantor responsible for paying the tax on the income allows that income to stay in the trust and continue to grow, income tax free (at least as far as the trust is concerned) over time. The grantor, by paying the trust's income tax liability, is effectively making an additional gift to the trust, or, ultimately, the beneficiaries of that trust – without actually using any of their annual exclusion amount or lifetime exemption amount – with every tax payment made.

The House bill, as presented, included provisions that would have caused the value of the assets in any irrevocable grantor trust created after its effective date to be included in the grantor's estate for estate tax purposes. It also would have treated as an additional gift by the grantor certain distributions from the trust to beneficiaries, and all of the trust assets if the "grantor trust status" was terminated at any time during the grantor's lifetime. The proposed changes would have removed irrevocable grantor trusts from our gift and estate tax planning toolbox, and would have required a careful review of existing grantor trusts to ensure no adverse consequences for any actions taken after the effective date of the House bill.

As in the *Schoolhouse Rock!* video, the House bill underwent many changes as part of the negotiation process. The version that ultimately passed the House on November 19 had a scaled back price tag, and, quite surprisingly, none of the sweeping gift and estate tax changes that were initially included. After passing the House in November, the bill subsequently stalled in the Senate, when in December Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) refused to support it. He joined the 50 Republican senators, who banded together in unanimous opposition to the bill. Now, with a vote on the bill in the Senate delayed, and the 2022 midterm elections on the horizon, where does that leave us? In a similar position to where we were at the end of 2020, having wrapped up year-end gifting in anticipation of the possible revival of some of the Democrats' original gift and estate tax proposals. However, none of us are inclined to bet on what may actually happen in 2022 with the Democratic control of the Senate being far more tenuous than it seemed at this time last year.

The Pandemic Strikes Again – COVID-19 and Delayed Marriages

"When you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible."

- Billy Crystal's character, Harry Burns, in the 1989 romantic comedy, *When Harry Met Sally*

The ongoing pandemic continues to put a number of things on hold, including marriages. Although many are still pitting their patience against the pandemic and waiting for that family and friend-filled event they always envisioned, some decided to bite the bullet and marry in smaller ceremonies over the past year. The glitz and glam of the wedding itself is certainly a highlight of marriage, but there are many other critically important, though we admit far less glamorous, implications to marrying (or not).

In Maine and New Hampshire (and every other state), spouses are granted certain automatic rights upon their spouse's disability or death. Although some rights apply to spouses as well as to "spouse-like" relationships, others do not.

Under Maine law, both spouses and "domestic partners" enjoy equal priority in the context of being appointed a guardian or conservator of an incapacitated person, ahead of both an adult child and a parent of the incapacitated person. Maine's priority for someone to serve as a surrogate – a person authorized to make health care decisions for

an individual in the absence of a named agent under a health care directive or a guardian appointed by the Probate Court – ranks both a spouse (unless legally separated), and "[a]n adult who shares an emotional, physical and financial relationship with the patient similar to that of a spouse" ahead of an adult child or parent in priority.

New Hampshire does not have a statutory preference in favor of spouses, domestic partners, or those in spouse-like relationships.

Although being in a domestic partnership or spouse-like relationship may come with certain priorities in the context of decision-making for an unmarried partner, these rights do not extend to the laws of intestate succession and elective shares in either Maine or New Hampshire unless the unmarried partner is a Maine "registered domestic partner."

A person dies "intestate" when they do not have a valid Will, and every state has a set of laws – intestacy statutes – that determines where a person's probate assets pass in the absence of a valid Will. Sometimes the intestacy statutes match what a person would want and expect. Often, however, they do not. One context in which they do not is between unmarried partners.

The intestacy laws of Maine provide that a surviving spouse is automatically entitled to at least ½ of their deceased spouse's estate, and in some circumstances all of the deceased spouse's estate. The intestacy laws of New Hampshire provide that a spouse is automatically entitled to a minimum of the first $100,000 plus ½ the balance, and in some circumstances the entire estate. The intestacy laws do not make any provisions for unmarried partners, except that in Maine a "registered domestic partner" (not recognized in New Hampshire) is treated the same as a spouse. A possible result of intestacy in the context of unmarried partners is that the deceased partner's parents receive everything, and the surviving partner receives nothing.

The "elective share" applies even if a person has a valid Will, but does not leave sufficient assets (or sometimes leaves no assets) to their surviving spouse. The elective share law exists to prevent someone from disinheriting their spouse. The amount a surviving spouse is entitled to "elect" to take varies between Maine and New Hampshire, and among the other states in the country, but in general, elective share laws provide a surviving spouse with up to one-half of their deceased spouse's "augmented estate", even if a Will expressly leaves less to the surviving spouse. In Maine, the elective share right increases with the duration of the marriage, with the share being as low as 3% of the augmented estate if the marriage lasted less than one year to as much as 50% after 15 years of marriage. As is true with rights in intestacy, an unmarried partner who is not a Maine registered domestic partner has no elective share rights if not satisfied with the provisions of the deceased partner's Will.

Homestead rights, family allowance, and exempt property statutes also provide spouses with certain rights to a share of their deceased spouse's assets, often "off the top" – before even creditors' claims can be satisfied. As with the laws of intestacy and elective share rights, these rights are limited to spouses, and in Maine, to registered domestic partners.

As the number and duration of unmarried partnerships increase, it is important for unmarried partners to recognize that in certain circumstances marriage provides protections that unmarried partnerships do not. Like pre-marital and post-marital agreements, domestic partnership agreements are often used to alter the rights created or denied by state statute. If you would like assistance and advice with regard to the creation of a pre- or post-marital agreement or a domestic partnership agreement, we will be happy to talk with you.

Fiduciary Selection

"You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

- Abraham Lincoln

One of the more difficult questions we see clients grapple with as part of the estate planning process is who to select to play the various roles in their plans. Often, it is the difficulty of making these decisions that leads clients to kick the estate planning can down the road. We get it. We have partners. We are parents. We have friends and relatives who would be logical choices, and those who would not. We know how difficult it can be to decide on the person who would do what you would do with your assets, if you could – or, even worse, the person or people who would raise your children as well as you would.

Here's a secret: those people don't exist. No one will make the same decisions you would every time. No one will raise your children as well as you would. Nevertheless, when the available options are for you to make the choice in your estate planning documents, or for someone else (namely, the local probate judge) to make the choice for you, it is always, always better for you to make that choice.

People often think of the Will as the centerpiece of an estate plan. Although the Will, which has as its primary function directing who receives what, how and when, is an important piece, we often find that the selection of who will serve as a client's agent under a financial power of attorney or health care directive, personal representative under a Will, trustee of a trust, and, especially, guardian of minor children, is often what results in the most discussion with – and sometimes dissension between – our clients. Although we have the experience to ask the questions and explore the scenarios that will hopefully help guide our clients, the selection of fiduciaries – as with every other decision in an estate plan – is ultimately our clients'. We often say our most important job in the estate planning process is to educate our clients, so they can make informed decisions that work for themselves and their families, and that is especially true when addressing fiduciary selection.

Spouses or partners are often, but not always, a natural choice to serve as personal representative, trustee, and agent under both the financial power of attorney and health care directive. Even when the spouse or partner is a natural choice, for many people it is important that the spouse or partner have a co-personal representative, co-trustee, or co-agent to be part of the decision-making process. And, anytime a client names someone to serve in the role of a fiduciary, we encourage the client to name one or more people as a back-up for each of those roles, in acknowledgement of the possibility that the named fiduciary will be unable or unwilling to serve.

Undoubtedly the most difficult decision to make when selecting a fiduciary is appointing a guardian for minor children. There are a number of factors to consider. Is it important that the guardian be a relative? Or, are you comfortable appointing a non-relative, but perhaps expressly encouraging contact with the family? Is it important that there be other children in the home – or not? Is geography relevant? How important is it that you have a shared religion and values with the guardian? If you select a couple, what happens if they divorce, or if one of them dies?

Selecting agents for the health care directive can also be a difficult choice for many clients. It is important to choose someone who you trust, who will ask questions and advocate for you, and who you are confident will act in accordance with your wishes, as far as they know them.

Although the field of fiduciaries for purposes of the Will, a trust, and the financial power of attorney tends to be much broader than for guardians and health care agents, they can be broken down into two main categories: professional, and non-professional. A professional fiduciary can be defined many different ways, but generally it is a bank, a trust company, an attorney, or an accountant. Although there are certainly situations when a professional fiduciary makes excellent sense – for example, in administering complicated trusts or estates, or when trying to preserve or promote family harmony by removing any perceived favoritism (or bickering) from the equation – our clients are often well-served by choosing non-professional fiduciaries. As with the health care agent, these fiduciaries should be trustworthy, and if not knowledgeable enough to "do it all" on their own, then knowledgeable enough to get help when needed.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that geography is far less of a limiting factor in many ways than it used to be. With the ability to e-sign documents and the acceptance of faxed or scanned signatures, along with the relative ease of Zoom medical consults, actions can often be taken and decisions made from anywhere in the world. The financially savvy but geographically distant brother-in-law who may not have seemed a viable choice to serve as a back-up trustee a few years ago may be a logical choice now. Similarly, the nurse-cousin across the country may make perfect sense to serve under a health care directive now that we can see – if not yet fully embrace – the convenience of telemedicine.

Unfortunately, it is not unusual to see planning hung up because a client is uncertain who they should name to serve in these roles. One of the most important things to remember is that these decisions, once made, are not carved in stone. We often see clients revise their documents to change guardians as their children age, or as they become tied to a particular town or school, wanting to ensure that children would be placed with a guardian in a

familiar location. Clients also naturally revise their documents to remove aging parents from roles, and to name their children as they become responsible adults. We recognize that these are difficult decisions for our clients to make, and take seriously our role in guiding them through the decision process. If you are considering changing any of the role players in your existing estate planning documents, please contact us.

The Federal Gift and Estate Tax Exemption

As of January 1, 2022, the federal gift and estate tax exemptions are unified at $12.06 million – an inflationary increase from the 2021 exemption of $11.7 million. The tax rate on transferred assets over $12.06 million is a flat 40%. A person may use their $12.06 million exemption during lifetime or upon death to transfer assets without payment of gift or estate tax. The exemptions are not cumulative – whatever you use of your gift tax exemption during your lifetime reduces dollar-for-dollar the estate tax exemption available at your death. The gift and estate tax exemptions will continue to increase with annual inflationary adjustments until January 1, 2026, when the current gift and estate tax exemption established by former President Trump's tax policy in 2018 expires, and the exemption amount rolls back to $5 million, adjusted for inflation, if no new laws are enacted between now and then. In light of the past year, we've stopped placing bets on whether any such new laws will be enacted.

The generation-skipping transfer tax exemption is tied to the gift and estate tax exemptions, and also increased to $12.06 million on January 1, 2022.

The annual federal gift tax exclusion amount, which had remained unchanged since January 1, 2018, has increased, to $16,000 for gifts made in 2022. The annual gift tax exclusion permits a person to give $16,000 per year to as many recipients as desired, without eroding the $12.06 million federal gift and estate tax exemption. Spouses can elect to split gifts, allowing them to make total gifts of $32,000 per year to as many recipients as they desire, even if more than one-half of the gift comes from only one spouse's assets. As has been the case for many years, direct payments of tuition and certain medical expenses are not subject to gift tax, and may be made in addition to the $16,000 annual gift tax exclusion.

The annual gift tax exclusion for gifts to non-U.S. citizen spouses increased to $164,000 on January 1, 2022, an increase from $159,000 in 2021.

Neither Maine nor New Hampshire has a separate gift tax, but gifts made within one year of death are included in the calculation of Maine estate tax.

The Maine Estate Tax

The Maine estate tax exemption in 2021 was $5.87 million. As of January 1, 2022, the Maine estate tax exemption amount increased to $6.01 million, based on an inflationary adjustment. Our Maine clients with estates valued at more than $6.01 million need to be sure that their estate planning documents are designed with the flexibility to account for the difference in the Maine and federal exemptions.

The Maine estate tax has three rates ranging from 8% to 12% that apply in $3 million increments. The 2022 brackets are:

- Up to $6.01 million: no tax
- Greater than $6.01 million and no more than $9.01 million: 8% of the excess over $6.01 million
- Greater than $9.01 million and no more than $12.01 million: 10% of the excess over $9.01 million, plus $240,000
- Above $12.01 million: 12% of the excess over $12.01 million, plus $540,000

With Maine being one of the only 17 states that imposes an estate or inheritance tax, it remains firmly on the list of states you don't want to be caught dead in if you have assets valued in excess of the Maine estate tax exemption amount (or in excess of two times the Maine estate tax exemption amount if you and your spouse or partner have done proper Maine estate tax planning to ensure that both persons' exemptions are fully utilized). Despite our recommendation last year that our faithful readers watch the workings of the Maine legislature throughout 2021 for bills to reduce the Maine estate tax exemption amount, much like with the federal estate tax exemption amount, we are still waiting… though no longer holding our breath.

While the federal estate tax exemption is portable – meaning what a deceased spouse does not use upon his or her death, the surviving spouse can elect

to use upon their later death (and note again here the use of the term "spouse" – unmarried partners do not enjoy portability) – the Maine estate tax exemption is not. Therefore, effective Maine estate tax planning requires that Maine couples – both married and unmarried – who have combined assets valued at more than the Maine estate tax exemption amount include tax savings provisions in the estate planning documents of the first of them to die.

New Hampshire - A New England Estate Tax Free Haven

New Hampshire is one of the 33 states that imposes neither an estate tax nor an inheritance tax. So, if you want to escape the Maine estate tax but don't want to leave these lovely New England winters behind, you don't have to go far.

State of the Estate Review

"To be successful in life, Plan, Implement, Revise, Update, and Build on Change."

- Abhishek Shukla, psychologist and self-help author

Our clients often ask us how often they should update their estate planning documents. Our answer is that classic lawyer response: It depends. Through this annual *Estate Planning Year in Review*, we inform you of changes to the gift and estate tax, along with other information that we hope you will find informative and useful. However, we cannot tell you when your children are responsible enough to receive their inheritance outright as opposed to in trust. We cannot tell you when your parent is no longer fit to serve as guardian for your minor children. Only you can determine those things. While we pride ourselves on making estate planning documents as flexible as possible to accommodate changing circumstances and changing laws, it remains essential that you take responsibility for reviewing your estate plan with us from time to time to ensure that your estate planning documents aren't tied to tax laws or to personal or family circumstances that no longer exist.

Our *State of the Estate Review* is an acknowledgement that estate planning is not a one-time undertaking. It is a continuing process, and one that requires conscious attention by you in order for it to be successful. As your assets and the tax laws both change over time, so may your goals and your family situation. Children grow and, hopefully, mature. People who we name to serve key roles in our plans also age, or move away. It is up to you to take stock of your documents and your situation periodically and reach out to us when it is time to make changes. We are also happy to engage in a review of your plans with you if you need a refresher. However, absent your request to schedule a *State of the Estate Review*, we will not be responsible for reviewing or updating your estate plan to reflect changes in the law, or for other purposes.

Some Big Dogs

"If you can't run with the big dogs, stay on the porch."

- Many, including the late, great John Madden, NFL Hall of Fame coach

Drummond Woodsum is proud to count among its ranks many of the top lawyers in their fields. We not only represent individual clients with their personal estate planning needs. We also provide legal guidance for clients serving as fiduciaries – from banks and trust companies to individual family members – and succession planning for our large and small business owner clients. Our colleagues have expertise in real estate, intellectual property, litigation, and general business matters. We are honored to be part of such a diverse group of professionals, and feel that we best serve our clients when we can provide as many top-notch services as possible within our walls.

For the 4th year in a row, Drummond Woodsum has been recognized as one of the Best Places to Work in Maine. Without question, one of the many factors that make it a great place to work is the excellence of the quality of work done by our colleagues.

Forty-two lawyers from 41 practice areas are listed in the 2021 edition of The Best Lawyers in America. Seven lawyers were named as 2020 Lawyers of the Year by Best Lawyers. Twenty-seven lawyers in 3 offices were selected by peers for inclusion in New England Super Lawyers and Rising Stars for 2021.

David Backer and John Kaminski were each recognized by Super Lawyers and/or Best Lawyers in America for their work in trust and estate planning and probate, and John was also recognized for his skill in tax law. John was also recognized as the 2020

Tax Lawyer of the Year for Portland, Maine by Best Lawyers.

Both David and John are elected Fellows of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel. A lawyer cannot apply for membership in the College. Fellows of the College are selected on the basis of professional reputation and ability in the fields of trusts and estates. David was one of only six lawyers in Maine recognized by the 2021 Chambers *High Net Worth Guide* as a "Band 1" lawyer - the highest distinction awarded by Chambers - in the realm of Private Wealth Law. Chambers' 2021 review of David, based on interviews with other professionals in the field of private wealth law, says: "I would absolutely recommend David Backer, he is at the top of my list for referrals in a conflict situation," comments an interviewee, adding: "He is always someone I would call for a second opinion on a really technical issue. He has a great eye for detail, he is very easy to work with and has a great manner with clients." Another interviewee highlights Backer's attention to detail, noting: "He is a master of detail. He loves the intellect involved in seeing how the law fits together and the technical aspects of putting an estate plan together." One interviewee remarks: "If you ever have a question about the Maine Uniform Probate Code, he is the person to go to." The *High Net Worth Guide* covers the private wealth market in key jurisdictions around the world and is designed to be an all-encompassing resource for high net worth individuals and their advisors.

David is currently in his 13th year as a member of Maine's Probate and Trust Law Advisory Commission created by the Maine Legislature in 2009 and has served as Chair of the Commission since its creation. The Commission, made up of lawyers and judges, is charged with conducting a continuing study of the probate and trust laws in Maine and making recommendations to the Legislature for how those laws may be improved.

Jessica Scherb is on the Board of Directors of the Maine Estate Planning Council. She is a frequent speaker on estate planning and trust and estate administration subjects. Jessica is licensed to practice in both Maine and New Hampshire, where she provides estate planning and trust and estate administration services, as well as a broad range of business services, for her clients. Jessica was recognized as a Rising Star (recognizing those attorneys age 40 or under, or who have been practicing 10 years of less) in estate planning & probate as well as mergers & acquisitions by Super Lawyers for the years 2011-2019.

Chris Stevenson is a tax attorney and certified public accountant. We turn to Chris for input on the many tax issues inherent in trust and estate planning and administration. Chris also regularly advises clients with respect to federal gift taxation and prepares federal gift tax returns. Chris was recognized as a Rising Star in tax law by Super Lawyers for the years 2011-2018.

Dee Barton is a tax attorney who began her early career as a tax consultant in a public accounting firm before transiting to a traditional law firm setting. Dee's diverse experience in tax matters, including significant international tax planning and advising, has given her excellent tools to provide comprehensive tax analyses and planning for businesses and trusts of any size and level of complexity. She was recently named as "One to Watch" by Best Lawyers.

When disputes arise in estate and trust administration, we regularly turn to Dave Sherman, who has broad experience in resolving estate and trust disputes in the Maine courts. He is recognized as a New England Super Lawyer in estate and trust litigation, general litigation, and business litigation. He was also recognized as the 2018 Litigation Real Estate Lawyer of the Year for Portland, Maine by Best Lawyers.

Thank You for Your Trust

We take seriously the trust you place in us and will continue to do everything possible to continue to earn your trust.

DrummondWoodsum

For a full list of attorneys, office locations, and the latest Drummond Woodsum news, please visit us online at **www.dwmlaw.com**.