

MASSACHUSETTS LAWYERS WEEKLY

Cite this page 30 M.L.W. 5557

August 19, 2002

Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly • B3

ESQ.

MARC REDLICH Boston

In addition to managing a bustling Boston civil litigation practice, Marc Redlich represents the government of Switzerland. But the job's not *all* Alps and edelweiss. Redlich recently negotiated a sister-state agreement between Massachusetts and the Swiss city-state of Basel — which, like Boston, is the “hub” of its area, he notes. In 2000, Redlich helped establish the Swiss consulate in Cambridge, and he is president of Friends of Switzerland, a Boston-based organization that he calls “a labor of love.” For all the similarities between Basel and Boston, Redlich remains fascinated by the subtleties that distinguish them. “Although everyone speaks the same language — literally — there are cultural differences,” he observes. “What I have done over the past 20 years is helped to bridge those cultural differences.” Redlich recently sat down with *Lawyers Weekly's* Marc Hogan.

Born: Nov. 25, 1946; New York, N.Y.

Education: Harvard Law School, 1971; Queens College, 1967

Bar admission: 1971

Professional experience: Law Offices of Marc Redlich (1984-present); Widett, Slater & Goldman, partner (1980-1984), associate (1976-1980); Rubin & Rudman, associate (1971-1975)

Professional affiliations: National Association of College and University Attorneys, Massachusetts Bar Association

Interests: Music, horseback riding, tennis, golf, family

Q. *What does your representation of the government of Switzerland entail?*

A. It was initially to work with the government to set up a new Swiss consulate in the Boston area. This was to be a very different type of consulate. It was to be, and is now, a place that serves as a liaison between Swiss academe and U.S. academe, Swiss businesses and U.S. businesses — to provide a place where there could be an exchange of information, technology and cultural activities. It opened in October 2000 and has been active in those areas ever since.

Q. *How did the government of Switzerland come to find you, a small-firm practitioner in the City of Boston?*

A. Some years back I was asked to represent the Swiss pharmaceutical firm of Hoffman-LaRoche, specifically representing two of its subsidiaries here in the Boston area called the Kontron Group. As a result of that I did some traveling to Switzerland. I enjoyed its art, its culture, and the similarities between its form of government and our own. To continue with those activities I studied German in order to be able to converse with my clients, who at that time were primarily from the German-speaking part of Switzerland. I joined an organization called Friends of Switzerland in Boston, and eventually was asked to serve as president of that organization, which I've been doing for the past 10 years.



Photo by Jacqueline Giron

During the course of these activities, I became acquainted with the general consul of Switzerland in New York, Dr. Alfred Defago. He was eventually named ambassador of Switzerland to the United States. He asked me if I would work with the government of Switzerland to help establish this consulate. And I have counseled the government on other matters that pertain to activities here in the Boston and Massachusetts areas in general.

Q. *Do you travel much back and forth?*

A. Not as much as I'd like to! I do get over to Switzerland about once a year. I love to travel, and that is a nice benefit of doing this work.

Q. *You represent the Canton of Basel-Stadt, a Swiss city-state. What types of matters do you handle in that capacity?*

A. I was asked to work with the Canton of Basel-Stadt to explore the possibilities of a sister-state program with Massachusetts, because they had recognized that there were real similarities and the possibility of synergy between the two areas. In conjunction with that, we have been trying to develop student exchange programs, and the idea of attracting businesses to each of the locations. There have been Basel firms that have looked at Massachusetts as a suitable place to establish their U.S. facilities and we are looking into the possibilities of U.S. firms establishing their European headquarters in Basel.

Q. *Why was Basel chosen to be a "sister state"? In what ways is it similar to Massachusetts?*

A. The similarities between the two areas are very strong. Basel, like Massachusetts, has a very strong bioresearch and biotechnology sector. Basel is the home to Hoffman LaRoche, Novartis and several other large pharmaceutical companies, as well as many smaller bio-research companies that have been established to do research and development along the Rhine River — from Basel to Strasbourg, France, and Freiburg, Germany. [It's] very similar to our Route 128 or Route 495 complex of bioresearch activities here. They also have a hi-tech sector there that fits in nicely with our work here in Massachusetts. Basel is the home to UBS, the financial services firm, and we have a strong financial services, investment and banking community here in Boston. Basel is the hub of its area, because it's at the point where France, Germany and Switzerland meet, just as Boston is the hub of its area. So there are a lot of similarities that caused both parties to look at each other and say, yeah, there's a real chance for synergy and progress that can be made here. Basel has the oldest university in Switzerland; we have Harvard University [among others].

Q. *What's the purpose of designating a sister state?*

A. The purpose is to have the two regions work together in order to improve the exchange of cultural activities, business and trade, and the exchange of technology and ideas, between one another. Massachusetts has only a few relationships that have reached the point of sister state. The sister-state relationship is a plateau — not the beginning and certainly not the end of the relationship — but a plateau that we can now build on towards the next level.

Q. *What legal issues does it involve for you, the government's lawyer?*

A. Obviously, on some basic level, it was a contract, so one would have to look at that in terms of what are the contractual relationships between the two parties. It was not what I would call a purely legal issue; it was more of a policy and an establishment of a relationship between the two areas. I'm sure that I brought my legal skills to bear on it in terms of the discussions, having in mind the goals, and a method for reaching those goals that I use in other, more purely legal matters.

Q. *You're working in two different countries, under two different sets of laws. What's that like?*

A. Switzerland does have a system of government very similar to ours. They have a federal system under their constitution of 1848 that was based on our Constitution. At the same time, the United States has taken ideas from the Swiss method, including initiative and referendum. The countries have been known as "the Sister Republics" for some years — which is a nice adjunct to the sister state. In terms of its legal significance, the agreement had to be approved by the Basel state Legislature, and it had to be approved by the governor's office as well.

Q. *You seem pretty immersed in all things Switzerland. How did that come about?*

A. It started with my representation of Hoffman LaRoche, and later I did work for some other Swiss companies, as well as BMW, the German auto manufacturer. Presently I represent universities, including Northeastern University, and the Friedrich-Alexander University in Nuremberg. So I've had an interest in international work for some time.

Q. *What do you do in your practice when you're not handling Swiss matters?*

A. I do a variety of civil litigation: business, corporate, securities and employment litigation. I've represented companies, defending employment claims. I've represented Northeastern University for many years. We have a very a broad-based litigation practice. Work with foreign companies is a part of that practice, but our practice is much broader than that. 