

Changes in immigration law could reap big benefits for SBA winner Siskind Susser

BY CHRISTOPHER SHEFFIELD

The day after his immigration law firm, Siskind Susser P.C., won *Memphis Business Journal's* Small Business Award for its category, Greg Siskind was back at work watching C-SPAN and monitoring the immigration legislation making its way through the U.S. Senate. "I'm keeping a close watch on that," Siskind says. He says if the law passes, which could be by mid-summer but is

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unlikely — he suspects the amount of work could cause him to immediately hire five to 10 paralegals and two to three attorneys. The firm now has nine lawyers in its Memphis office as well as offices in Nashville, Atlanta, New York and Toronto. He estimates that as many as 100,000 people in the Memphis area would be affected by the immigration bill.

"There's very few areas of practice that would not be turned around with this legislation," says Siskind, a graduate of the University of Chicago law school who started the firm in 1994 with Lynn Susser, a University of Memphis law school graduate. Partner David Jones joined in 1999 after graduating from the U of M. Today it is one of the largest immigration law firms in North America, and through its pioneering Web site, *visalaw.com*, the firm has garnered international attention.

And while the immigration bill is brewing, Siskind says the firm is in the final stages of inking its first acquisition and is about to begin the public roll out of a referral alliance with a dozen immigration law firms in 12 countries that is also expected to have a significant impact. Planning for the alliance began in 2004, and for the past year they've been working on a Web site, he says.

As a part of the referral alliance, of which Siskind Susser is the anchor firm, each of the law firms in the alliance will act as a point of contact to handle immigration issues in that country for each other's clients.

Increasingly, corporations with a multi-national presence want to work with one firm or group to handle all of their needs and the referral alliance meets that need, he says.

"That will open us up to certain types of clients we haven't had," he says.

For example, Siskind has been working with a touring production company and handling all its immigration needs as the staff travels throughout Europe. In several countries he's been able to call on a member of the alliance to help in the process. And that will happen in reverse when clients of those firms have needs in the U.S., he says.

If that sort of growth does happen that quickly, Siskind Susser would have spent little time celebrating its Small Business Awards honor in the 1-25 employees category.

With all of these expected changes, it's fitting and timely that the 12-year-old firm is preparing to move into a newly acquired 11,000-square-foot office building at 1028 Oakhaven Road in East Memphis near Poplar and Interstate 240.

Siskind Susser plans to immediately occupy about 75% of the space, but leave about half of the second floor unfinished until it's clear where the new developments in immigration reform will take them.

Siskind suspects it's going to be more of the same. Immigration is in the spotlight daily, and work, especially for an award-winning law firm, is plentiful. "It's been very, very busy," he says.

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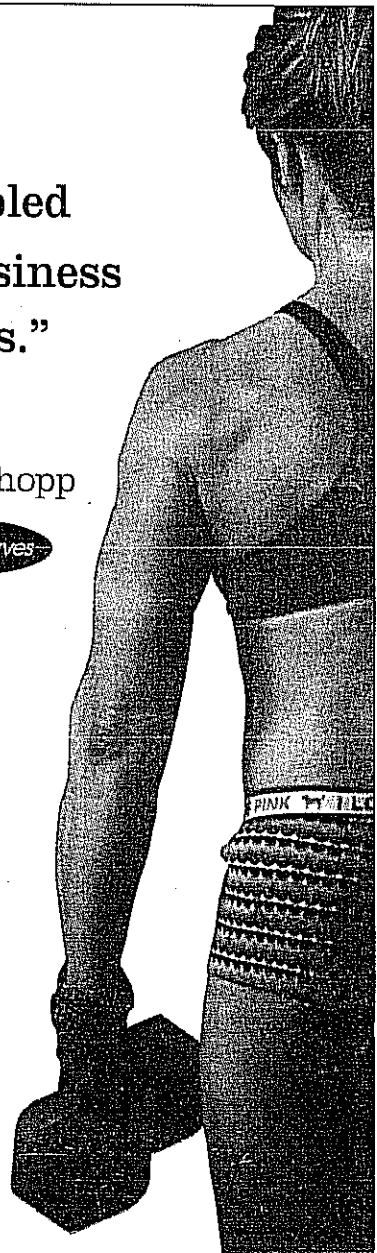
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