

MEET MIIAB'S NEW

LEGISLATIVE/REGULATORY COUNSEL AND LOBBYIST

ROBYN ROWEN, J.D.

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As MIIAB's lobbyist, Robyn Rowen helps to maintain the association's daily presence in St. Paul. With over 20 years experience in association legislative work she employs her strong relationships with legislators and their staff, as well as the Department of Commerce, to advocate on MIIAB's members' behalf.



Tell us a little bit about your experience?

I started Robyn Rowen & Associates in 2007 as a boutique firm providing specialized services in legislative and regulatory advocacy. Before launching RR&A, I served as the Vice President of Government Affairs for United Health Group and Executive Vice President of the Insurance Federation of Minnesota. I also spent some time in Washington, D.C. lobbying on behalf of NAII which is now the American Property Casualty Insurance Association.

What led you to become a lobbyist?

I like to tell people that I always wanted to be a lobbyist and used to dress up as one for Halloween. The truth, however, is that I stumbled into the profession like almost every lobbyist I know.

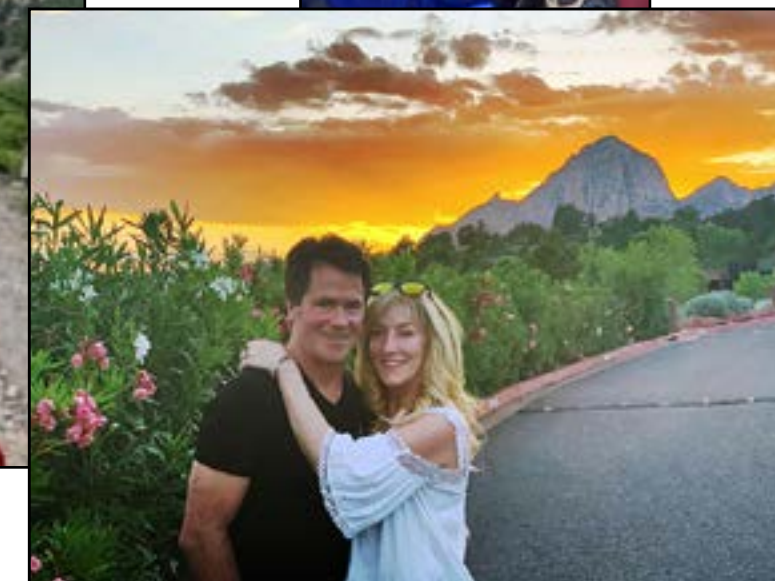
During law school, I found myself far more interested in the public policy behind the law than the actual practice of law. After graduation, I still wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my J.D., so I accepted a job as research counsel with the Illinois Legislature. I then left the Legislature for a brief flirtation with medical school. When I realized that was not the right fit (I couldn't see living off Ramen noodles for eight more years), I answered an advertisement in the Chicago Tribune for a lobbyist (which I have never seen before or since) and the rest is history.



Luke and Cole



Luke and I at the top of Mt Elbert



Marty and I in Sedona

Could you tell us a bit about your family?

I live with my husband, Marty, and my two sons Luke (15) and Cole(12) in Deephaven. Marty also works in government affairs-- it helps to have a spouse who understands the insane hours I keep especially when the Legislature is in session. As a family, we love to travel and hike. We have conquered multiple 14ers in Colorado (peaks over 14,000) and this past summer we hiked in and out of the Grand Canyon and still like each other.

What do you find fulfilling about being a lobbyist?

The cliché answer is that I love the interesting people I get to work with and the relationships I have been able to establish with legislators, regulators, staff, other lobbyists, and of course my fabulous clients. But it is true. I also love the problem- solving aspect of my job—developing strategies to turn an idea that will improve peoples' lives or businesses into a law and responding to all of the twists and turns along the way.

How important is it that agents become involved in grassroots political activity?

It is absolutely critical. Legislators want to hear from the voters in their districts--a constituent's voice can be more powerful than that of the best lobbyist.

In addition, agents have an important voice that is distinct from the insurance companies'. As business owners they instinctively understand the impact that laws and regulations can have on their agencies. More importantly, they have a unique and special relationship with the consumer that can help public policy makers make informed and wise decisions concerning laws and regulations.