

Energy

In the energy business, there are no small endeavors. The stakes in any project or enterprise are enormous. And the stakeholders include a dizzying array of businesses, citizens, regulators, and policymakers. The marketplace and the rules that govern it are constantly changing. Uncertainty and conflict are inevitable.

Navigating this terrain requires a proven ability to develop strategies and resolve disputes involving a unique blend of legal, financial, and technical questions. The attorneys on Michael Best's Energy team have extensive experience steering through difficult situations, guided not only by their legal ability, but also by a keen understanding of how to pinpoint the disparate perspectives and key demands of diverse constituencies.

That understanding stems from deep experience in litigation, regulatory, and legislative matters for the energy industry. Advising clients through multibillion-dollar construction projects and during drawn-out policymaking processes gives us a holistic perspective. Our lawyers have collaborated with clients on some of the biggest utility construction projects in the nation.

Every day we answer our clients' calls on matters ranging from the routine to the unexpected, advising them at each step when an inspector shows up unannounced at their offices, a subcontractor quibbles over a payment, or they're visited by any of the many other surprises that tend to complicate the energy business. In such a high-risk, high-stakes environment, conflicts are bound to happen — with partners and vendors, with competitors, with regulators, with lawmakers, and even sometimes with the very communities where our energy clients do business.

We understand, and never forget, that our role as counsel is to zealously represent our clients and their interests in those situations. But we also understand, from years of working through highly complex, demanding situations, that the best way to resolve disputes in our clients' favor is to ensure that they remain in control, no matter how contentious the situation becomes or what turns it might take along the path toward resolution.

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Our time-tested approach has served our clients well for decades. And it's more relevant than ever as our energy clients face an ever-widening array of stakeholders with divergent interests. In this setting, it's vital to work with counsel who understand the bumps in the road as well as what's around the corner — and the corner after that.

Experience

Transmission line

In 2013, for the first time ever, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ordered two energy companies to jointly construct, own, and operate a high-voltage transmission line. The new transmission line would cover 180 miles and deliver 345 kilovolts of electricity; it would also help provide a more stable and reliable power grid for the Midwest.

Representing one of the parties, we not only helped our client navigate vast numbers of agreements and paperwork involving ownership, management, construction, and administration — we also advised on setting sensible ground rules that helped establish the level of trust that was crucial to transforming a forced union into a true partnership.

Power Plants

In an era marked by seismic shifts in regulatory, political, and social attitudes toward power generation, planning and building new power plants has never been more challenging. Nevertheless, in recent years our Energy team has helped bring a number of new power plants to life. They range from a state-of-the-art coal generation facility, constructed even as coal came under intense scrutiny as a power source, to a number of wind generation projects involving issues new to power plant construction, such as working with local governments on concerns like noise, visual interruption, and community health.

In any project of that scale, disputes are inevitable, and when new technology is involved, it becomes even more fraught with risk. Our success in helping clients avoid catastrophic disputes comes from our focus on identifying problems early on and resolving them in a way that allows the risk to be allocated appropriately. Our goal is always to ensure that our clients are not unfairly saddled with the increased costs that can accompany unanticipated problems.