

From the President's Desk

Upcoming Global Conference to set the stage for a passing of the torch

In February, Primerus will mark its 34th anniversary, an occasion that will be the beginning of a year-long farewell tour of sorts for me, who founded the organization with several purposes in mind during a pivotal time when the leaders of the U.S. and Russia declared that the Cold War was over.

In a sense, 2026 will serve as my “last hurrah” as the president of Primerus, a now global organization that began with high hopes in 1992 in the West Michigan city of Grand Rapids, a community that has been home to some of the nation’s most noteworthy business success stories.

The city, of course, also was the boyhood home of a future president, Gerald R. Ford, who represented the district in Congress with distinction for 25 years before serving as Vice President and then Commander in Chief at a time when the country was rocked by an unprecedented political crisis.

When I founded Primerus more than three decades ago, I did so with the primary intention of marshaling forces in the legal community for the greater good. Back then, our original focus was to highlight the important role that lawyers play in upholding the rule of law and in peacefully resolving conflict. We

set out to restore honor and dignity to the profession, and to help rebuild the public’s trust in lawyers and our system of justice.

In addition to those objectives, Primerus also was built to be a self-sustaining business enterprise that had the potential to grow and prosper financially, which it has done thanks to a combination of factors centered on our Six Pillars. From our modest beginnings of just a handful of member law firms in the Grand Rapids area, we now are international in size and scope with members in nearly 50 countries who have developed cross-border business relationships that endure.

The Six Pillars have served as our guideposts throughout our growth, a time when the concepts of honesty and morality have been degraded by those bent on sowing the seeds of democracy’s destruction while glorifying the ruthlessness of authoritarian rule.

At the heart of Primerus is an unyielding commitment to the time-honored qualities of honesty, integrity, value, competence, civility, and community service. A belief in those standards has been instrumental in propelling our growth on a global scale, serving as our moral compass as we have



invited “Good People Who Happen to Be Good Lawyers” into the world of Primerus.

The ideals will be on full display this fall when Primerus members gather in the New Mexico capital of Santa Fe for our annual Global Conference, October 9-11. The three-day event will be staged at the magnificent Inn and Spa at Loretto and will feature the theme of “Best Strategies for Challenging Times,” a tumultuous period that has upended the world order and made it alarmingly clear that the Cold War is far from over.

At this global gathering, we encourage each Primerus law firm to send at least one representative, which will underscore our commitment as a worldwide legal alliance to the preservation of the rule of law and the democratic principles we cherish. And relatedly, we should embrace the fact that historically the world has looked to those in the legal profession to take the lead in ensuring the future of a free and civilized society.

In addition, the annual Global Conference offers members a golden

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opportunity to broaden their legal horizons, tapping into the knowledge and experience from an exceptional lineup of featured speakers. The global gathering – with the rich heritage of Sante Fe and nearby Albuquerque as its backdrop – also serves as a perfect setting for welcoming young lawyers in your firm to the world stage, where they will be afforded the chance to meet and mix with Primerus members from across the globe.

In a collective sense, the Global Conference is a “must” for each Primerus firm, bringing together legal practitioners from different countries and cultures with a goal of betterment uppermost in mind. It also will be an opportunity to celebrate the growth of Primerus in the African, Middle Eastern, and Asian frontiers, three regions that have been largely underrepresented as our international alliance of law firms has developed over the past 33 years. Their presence in the Primerus community represents a significant step in our global development, broadening our reach and expanding individual opportunities to create potentially important business relationships.

This year’s event will take on added importance as we consider the future look

of Primerus and how it will be shaped by its stakeholders. As our history has shown, the opportunity to be a participant enriches the Primerus experience and can enhance the overall quality of life factors that have been magnified in the post-COVID work environment.

Next summer, I will coincidentally celebrate a birthday milestone, which will be a steppingstone to a Primerus turning point in February 2027 when we mark our 35th anniversary. At that time, we officially will transition to new leadership, someone who will be tasked with charting the future of Primerus, which can take one of three pathways.

First, the new Primerus president can continue to expand our operations around the world and can further enhance efforts to make Primerus a global brand that corresponds with excellence in all facets of the legal profession.

Option two is to maintain the status quo, to table planned investments in technology and expanded member services in favor of stability, predictability, and a risk aversion strategy where caution and prudence are especially valued.

Third, we can make a dramatic decision to disband operations, closing our doors while preserving our legacy as a

global legal alliance that made significant strides in building business bridges while improving the public image of the legal profession.

My hope, of course, is that we find a leader who is passionate about growing our business operation, a visionary who, with bold strokes and ingenuity, can usher in a new era of progress for Primerus, further cementing our status as a recognizable and trusted brand in the global legal community.

The job is tailor-made for someone with the leadership skills and smarts to capitalize on the momentum we have generated as an organization that values the spirit of entrepreneurship and has long operated as a debt-free business, rewarding its shareholders with consistent returns on their investment.

Passing the torch to the next president will be a process that begins with your help at this year’s Global Conference, as we seek to identify a generational leader with the talents, character, and vision to make the next chapter in the history of Primerus even more rewarding and compelling.

Best regards,

Jack Buchanan, President