

Not only an influential lawyer for industry—she also plays in a band

Katherine W. King is a gentle yet firm warrior in Louisiana industry's battle to stay competitive in a ruthless global economy.

State regulators have given back more than \$700 million in refunds to energy customers in the past decade, and King has been in the trenches for much of it.

A partner with the law firm Kean

Miller Hawthorne D'Armond McCowan & Jarman LLP, King is the lead attorney representing two dozen of the state's largest industries, known as the Louisiana Energy Users Group. Her job: helping industry work out more competitive arrangements for buying power.

"I get a good feeling with helping with retaining jobs in Louisiana," King

says. "A lot of people rely on those plants."

Plants consume copious power. Cutting energy costs means going toe-to-toe with Entergy, which has long dominated Louisiana's energy market.

King's task usually involves convincing regulators at the Public Service Commission or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to give industry a break on how and what it pays Entergy for power.

Louisiana industry now generates about 20% of its own power, thanks largely to deals struck to let them build their own power plants. King, 49, has been involved in clearing regulatory hurdles for more than a half-dozen so-called co-generation power facilities since joining Kean Miller in 1989.

During her early days with the firm, she had the chance to learn the business working with firm co-founder Gordon Kean. She also worked with Henry McNicholas, a bulldog of a man who relished a good fight.

King—mother of three, a former board member of the Girl Scouts and vice president of the nonprofit Children's Hope—is no bulldog.

Her gentle voice carries just a hint of the North Louisiana accent she acquired growing up in Winnfield. She took piano lessons as a child, which finally paid off in 1994 when she became the keyboard player for the Bench Bar Boogie Band, a group of musically inclined lawyers and judges with gigs about once a month.

King considers herself more a puzzle solver than a brawler: She prefers to bring adversaries together at the table to work hard on beneficial solutions instead of simply going to legal war.

"My philosophy is things get done the best and the fastest when business people talk to business people," King says. "When that works, it usually yields the best result that's also the quickest and cheapest for the client."

King's role involves bringing together engineers, plant managers, consultants and executives representing companies that often are arch-competitors.

She actually started her career in industry: King was one of the first female technicians in the testing lab at Borden Chemical in Ascension Parish. After studying microbiology as an undergraduate at LSU, her long-term goal was graduate school, then teaching or research.

After two years in the lab, she hungered for more people-oriented work, so she enrolled in LSU law school with an eye toward practicing environmental law. Opportunities at Kean Miller led her to utilities and telecommunications law, which she has specialized in since.

—Tom Guarisco



Katherine King

Partner, Kean Miller