

Karl Zobrist

Partner



Partner

Kansas City

D +1 816 460 2545

karl.zobrist@dentons.com

Overview

Karl Zobrist is a member of Dentons' Energy practice, specializing in the energy and telecommunications industries.

He represents electricity, natural gas and telecommunications companies, as well as industrial and investment companies interested in energy and public utility matters in a wide variety of proceedings before regulatory bodies. He also represents clients in complex commercial litigation in state and federal court.

Karl served as Chairman of the Missouri Public Service Commission (1996–1997) and chaired the Missouri Energy Policy Task Force (2001–2002).

He served as interim president of Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. (MISO) when it was founded in 1998. MISO was the first regional transmission organization certified by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 2001. Karl now serves as counsel to the MISO Board of Directors.

Before entering private practice, Karl was on active duty with the United States Navy, serving in the Office of the Judge Advocate General, where he represented clients in court-martial proceedings in New England, and before the military appellate courts in Washington, DC.

Experience

- Represents Kansas City Power & Light Company and KCP&L Greater Missouri Operations Company (formerly Aquila, Inc.) in general rate cases, mergers, certificate of convenience and necessity, and other regulatory proceedings. Defended favorable rate case orders successfully on appeal.
- Represented Great Plains Energy Incorporated and Kansas City Power & Light Company in the successful acquisition of Aquila, Inc. in contested proceedings before the Missouri Public Service Commission. Successfully defended orders granting regulatory approval at the Missouri Court of Appeals and the Missouri Supreme Court.
- Represents competitive electric transmission companies in state regulatory proceedings, including Clean Line Energy Partners LLC and Transource Energy, LLC.
- Negotiated and defended a comprehensive experimental regulatory plan approved by the Missouri Public

Service Commission that resulted in the construction of new super-critical coal plant, new wind generation and environmental upgrades, as well as the introduction of demand response and energy efficiency programs.

- Advises boards of directors of regional transmission organization, electric grid reliability coordinator and regional entity authorized to enforce FERC-approved reliability standards on matters of corporate governance.
- Obtained certificate of convenience and necessity for newly constructed natural gas electric generating plant.
- Represented natural gas local distribution company in state judicial proceedings regarding a dispute with a major industrial customer regarding metering, billing and collection issues.
- Obtained certificates of public convenience for the construction of new electric transmission lines and litigated siting cases related to new transmission projects before the Kansas Corporation Commission
- Represented wireless provider in successful eligible telecommunications carrier proceedings before state regulatory commission
- Negotiated settlement of environmental liability agreement related to sale of local natural gas distribution company
- Represents major industrial consumer in general rate cases, special contract and rate design proceedings of investor-owned water utility.
- Represented clients in US District Court and the US Court of Appeals relating to the Federal Power Act pre-emption of state jurisdiction in breach of contract and tort action, Johnson Act restrictions on federal review of state utility decisions in a class action case, and the taxation of rural electric cooperatives

Recognition

- Recipient of the *Missouri Lawyers* ICON Award, 2021
- Recognized in *The Legal 500 USA*: Energy: Regulatory: Conventional Power; Energy: Renewable Alternative Power; Energy: Litigation: Conventional Power

Honors and Awards

- *Best Lawyers in America*®
 - 2022 Kansas City Lawyer of the Year - Litigation - Regulatory Enforcement (SEC, Telecom, Energy)
 - 2021 Kansas City Lawyer of the Year - Energy Law
 - 2016 Kansas City Lawyer of the Year - Bet-the-Company Litigation
 - 2013 Kansas City Lawyer of the Year - Energy Law - 2013
 - Recognized for multiple categories including, Energy Law, Litigation - Regulatory Enforcement (SEC, Telecom, Energy), Commercial Litigation and Bet-the-Company Litigation since 2005
- Public Service Award, Office of Community Complaints, Kansas City Board of Police Commissioners, 2011
- Winner of the Judge H. Michael Coburn Professional Excellence Award, given by the Ross T. Roberts Inns of Court of the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association, 2006. Awarded annually to a member of the bar "who has distinguished himself or herself as a trial lawyer of uncompromising professionalism" and who "exemplifies qualities of excellence in trial advocacy, civility and a dedication to ethics in our profession."
- Outstanding Achievement Award, Augustana College, 2006

Insights

- "Achieving a Unified Energy Policy," *energybiz*, Fall 2007

Activities and Affiliations

Memberships

- He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission, where he serves as Vice Chair and General Counsel.
- Karl is President of the Harry S. Truman Good Neighbor Award Foundation, and is the Treasurer and a member of the Board of Directors of the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education.
- He is a member of the Board of Trustees of Augustana College.
- Karl concluded his tenure as a member of the Kansas City Board of Police Commissioners in 2010, when he became the longest-serving commissioner in Missouri history. He was appointed by Gov. Mel Carnahan in 2000, reappointed by Gov. Bob Holden in 2004, and served two terms as Police Board President.
- He is a past chairman of the Board of Directors of the Greater Kansas City Foreign Trade Zone, Inc.; is a former Chair of the Board of Directors of reStart, Inc., a residential homeless facility; and is a former Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Friends of the Conservatory of Music & Dance, University of Missouri - Kansas City.
- He is a member of the Energy Bar Association and the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association
- Karl is a former Chairman of the Missouri Public Service Commission (1996–1997).
- He chaired the Missouri Energy Policy Task Force 2001–2002.
- He is a Commander, Judge Advocate General's Corps, US Naval Reserve (Ret.).

Areas of focus

Practices

- Appellate Advocacy
- Energy Litigation
- Energy Regulation
- Litigation and Dispute Resolution
- Public Law
- Public Policy and Regulation

Industry sectors

- Communications
- Electricity
- Oil and Gas

- Wastewater Treatment, Water Management, Desalination
- Autonomous Vehicles

Issues and opportunities

- Global Smart Cities & Connected Communities Initiative and Think Tank

Education

- Augustana College, BA, *magna cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa
- University of Iowa, JD, with distinction; Note and Comment Editor of the *Iowa Law Review*

Admissions and qualifications

- Missouri
- US Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces
- US Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
- US Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit
- US District Court for the District of Kansas
- US District Court for the Western District of Missouri