

## Alumni Spotlight

February 2021

**Alumni Spotlight: Kevin Warren - Commissioner,  
Big Ten Athletic Conference**

Prior to joining Big Ten Conference, Kevin Warren worked at Greenberg Traurig's (GT) Phoenix office from 2003-05, playing a critical leadership role with the Wilf Ownership Group deal team during the acquisition of the Minnesota Vikings. Upon leaving GT, Kevin served as the Chief Operating Officer for the Minnesota Vikings of the National Football League. He was the highest-ranking African American executive working on the business side for a team in the NFL and the first African American COO in NFL history. The Big Ten Conference Council of Presidents and Chancellors (COP/C) voted unanimously on June 4, 2019, to select Kevin Warren as the sixth conference Commissioner in

history. We spoke to Kevin about his experience at GT, what he has learned during the global pandemic, and social justice causes he is most passionate about in 2021.

**1. Please tell us something about yourself that people do not know or something people would be surprised to learn about you?**

**KW:** I was 10½ years old when I was hit by a car while riding my bicycle. I spent multiple weeks in the hospital in traction followed by multiple weeks at home in a full body cast. I convinced my parents to use a portion of the insurance settlement to build a swimming pool in our backyard to help me with my rehabilitation. Seven years after being told I may never walk again I went on to play Division I basketball. That time in my life inspired me to write a book that will be published in 2021.

My book, "[Build Your Own Pool](#)", is an inspirational story about the importance of believing and investing in yourself.

## **2. Tell us something about yourself?**

**KW:** I understand the importance of having a strong relationship with God. I believe in the power of prayer and having a relentless prayer life. This June, my wife Greta and I will celebrate our 29th wedding anniversary. We have two wonderful children. Our daughter Peri (24), graduated from Occidental College and currently leads the Warren Family Foundation. She will begin working towards her Master's Degree in Business Communications at Northwestern University in the fall. Our son Powers (22), graduated in three and one-half years from Mississippi State University. He was a football student-athlete and is currently in the process of selecting where he will attend graduate school and play his final two years of college eligibility.

I enjoy collecting wine and sharing it with the people I love.

## **3. Please tell us something special about your current role as the sixth Commissioner in history of the Big Ten Conference?**

**KW:** The most special element about my position is being able to serve our nearly 10,000 student-athletes on a daily basis.

## **4. Please give us a look at your day-to-day role and responsibilities**

**KW:** As the Commissioner of the Big Ten, I am involved in every aspect of the conference. On any given day it can range from addressing the health and safety of student-athletes, collaborating with our 14-member institution stakeholders and constituents, officiating, finance, legal, media, broadcast and sponsor partnerships, marketing, branding and communications, to building an internal structure and culture. My head and heart are in every aspect of the conference.

## **5. How did GT prepare you for your current role?**

**KW:** My time at GT helped to shape my legal skills. It taught me the importance of focusing on the details no matter how big or small. It reinforced the best way to serve our clients is to think logically, creatively and to conduct business with the highest level of integrity.

## **6. Times of crisis have historically also been opportunities for change. What have you learned/experienced during the global pandemic?**

**KW:** In times of crisis, you must remain methodical, calm and flexible. Consistently be transparent, collaborative and communicate. Listen and then listen more.

My philosophy is to be a thermostat in good times and challenging times, not the thermometer.

## **7. What are you most proud of doing while at GT?**

**KW:** Working in a collaborative manner with a dedicated, creative, and intelligent team of lawyers, paralegals, and support staff to successfully close the acquisition of the Minnesota Vikings on behalf of the Wilf family.

## **8. What do you miss most about working at GT?**

**KW:** Client development presentations.

## **9. What advice do you have for attorneys moving from private practice to an in-house position?**

**KW:** Sometimes an issue may have a prudent legal resolution but a costly business impact. My recommendation for in-house counsel is to make sure the advice you provide makes both legal and business sense.

## **10. What advice would you give to new attorneys working at GT?**

**KW:** Recognize that the first four years of your legal practice will demand for you to make sacrifices in other areas of your life. You must take care of yourself. Drink 100 oz. of water a day, work out a minimum of five days a week, and get the appropriate amount of sleep. Professionally, you must take copious notes, consistently ask questions. Be the person first in to turn on the lights in the morning and the last out to turn off the lights at night.

## **11. What social justice causes are you most passionate about and why?**

**KW:** The education of young people in underserved communities and creating an environment of equity and equality for all people.

## **12. With Black History Month, who are your African American role models?**

**KW:** Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Condoleezza Rice, Ken Chenault, Oprah Winfrey, Harriet Tubman, and my parents, Margaret and Morrison Warren.

## **13. What is the best piece of advice that you have received?**

**KW:** Make tithing a priority and pray without ceasing.