

## OUR FEES

### **Do you charge for the first in-person meeting with an attorney at The Kramer Law Firm?**

Yes. The Kramer Law Firm charges an initial consultation fee of \$100/hour. If you choose to retain the Firm after the initial consultation, that fee will be applied to the final bill. For example, if you pay an initial consultation fee to discuss estate planning matters and then retain us to prepare your will and powers of attorney, the total fee will include a credit for the initial consultation payment. There is no charge for initial phone consultations.

### **Why do you charge for the first meeting?**

We know your time is valuable, and so is ours. We expect to accomplish quite a lot at our first meeting with you. We want to determine the scope of the problem, offer you suggestions on how to address it, decide how you want to proceed, and collect the information that we will need to begin the work. For this reason, we send you a questionnaire to complete and bring with you to the first meeting. Although you may not have met us before, the initial meeting is far more than a “getting to know you” session.

### **How much will this (legal work) cost me?**

At our first meeting, we will discuss your situation and the nature of the work that needs to be done, describe what we propose to do, and give you an estimate of how long that might take. We will prepare a fee agreement that spells out the work to be done and the fee we will charge. It will indicate whether you are paying a flat fee or an hourly fee and how often you can expect us to bill you. If the scope of the work changes, or if you require additional work that was not discussed at the initial meeting, we will prepare a new fee agreement to cover the additional work.

Unlike most law firms, we do not charge for any direct attorney-client communication. This allows the client to discuss any matter of concern freely with his attorney without cost concerns. Also, we do not bill for ordinary postage or photocopying expenses. We will charge for extensive photocopying services (if, for example, an entire file must be copied), or for unusual telecommunication services (such as conference calls) or other, similar, items.

### **Do you charge hourly fees for your representation?**

We usually charge at an hourly rate for matters such as contract review and negotiation. This is because the nature of the work and the amount of time required will vary from client to client, and because it can be difficult to predict these variables in advance. We may change our hourly rates from time to time.

### **Are all charges based on the hours expended?**

No. We charge a **flat fee** for a majority of our services, including business formations and most estate planning cases (wills, powers of attorney and revocable living trusts). This is easier when

the work has a discrete start and ending point, and we can estimate the amount of time it will take us to complete the work. It is our experience that clients usually prefer a flat fee arrangement, so that they know in advance how much they will be billed. Such an arrangement also allows our clients to schedule as many appointments and ask as many questions as may be necessary to ensure complete comfort with the final product, without being concerned about fees continuing to accrue as issues are resolved.

**Will I have to pay a retainer? How are balances paid?**

Unless otherwise agreed to at the initial meeting, a retainer of 50% of the estimated total fee of the legal services to be performed is collected at the beginning of representation and maintained in the Firm's IOLTA account. The retainer funds do not become property of the Firm until they are earned. The retainer fee, along with all fees, may be paid by personal check or major credit card. Payment of the balance of each engagement is due within thirty (30) days following receipt of an invoice. Each client is asked to provide valid credit card information to secure full payment of the final invoice. The client's credit card will be billed for any balance outstanding and owed to the Firm thirty (30) days following receipt of an invoice.

**Are you willing to negotiate a flat fee agreement?**

Usually, yes. We are ordinarily happy to negotiate a flat fee agreement with you at the initial consultation, even in cases where we would ordinarily charge an hourly fee.

**What if I'm not happy with the fee?**

If you have questions or concerns about the fee, please raise them with the attorney who is providing the services. The Bar of the State of Maryland also offers a fee arbitration mechanism, but we do not expect that you will need to go that far to resolve any fee dispute. Our attitude is that client satisfaction is important, both for our personal quality of work life and for the good business referrals it engenders.