



## Riker Danzig's Insurance Group Featured in NJLJ Article as "Litigation Dept of the Year"

Riker Danzig's Insurance Group, named the 2019 Insurance Litigation Department of the Year by the *New Jersey Law Journal*, is featured in an article entitled "[Litigators Must 'Partner With Clients Every Step of the Way,' Riker Danzig's Insurance Group Says.](#)" The *Law Journal* notes that we "handle cases that not only yield significant results but also help develop the law."

Insurance Group Co-Chairs Brian E. O'Donnell, also Riker's Firm Co-Chairman, and Lance J. Kalik, also Firm Co-Managing Partner, are interviewed for the article, discussing the group's successes and approach to being effective for our clients.

The article noted that we "won summary judgment last year on behalf of Lexington Insurance Co. and Chartis Specialty Insurance Co. in coverage litigation related to allegedly defective field turf; and, in another case representing Nationwide's Harleysville Insurance Co., won dismissal via a novel ruling in New York state court that a putative additional insured wasn't entitled to coverage because the named insured wasn't liable."

When asked about some of our most satisfying successes in 2018, we responded that each matter we handle for clients is satisfying in the sense that we care deeply about our clients' problems and are satisfied if they are satisfied. We pointed to the especially satisfying win for client Nationwide when we helped them recover in excess of \$1.4M against Wesco Insurance Company in a hotly contested case. "It was an especially satisfying win because we tried for more than three years to have Wesco participate voluntarily in resolving an underlying lawsuit, but it refused at every opportunity. Yet, we were able to recover the settlement and defense costs incurred by our client, with interest."

The *Law Journal* asked our Group Co-Chairs how we go “a step further for clients.” This was our response: “We try to partner with our clients every step of the way. Because our Insurance Group has so much experience, we are often asked to assist our clients with introductions to key players in the industry, set up meetings for potential business ventures, and enhance business development projects.”

The *Law Journal* also posed this question: Amid a changing market for legal services, what does it mean to be an effective litigator in New Jersey? We responded, “For our clients, we believe that an effective litigator must constantly assess the case to explore opportunities for resolution in the most cost-effective way possible. Sometimes, that approach will involve pressing a key issue or discovery tactic to obtain leverage and position the case for an early settlement. Other times, it may involve setting up a particular legal issue for resolution by a court in order to bring the parties together. While we have tried numerous cases to conclusion, and are always prepared to do so, there are many moments in the life of a litigation that a litigator can use to try to reach an earlier resolution for the client than a full trial on the merits.”

We also commented that, if a client wishes to avoid litigation, there are many other ways to assist a client in dispute resolution. “Whether a client opts for ADR, or simply face-to-face negotiations with an adverse party, we find that our expertise and experience in litigation helps best position our clients for negotiations even if formal litigation is not pursued.”

Finally, the *Law Journal* wondered what we do to ensure that our attorneys remain engaged with pro bono work, their communities and their families, since litigators are extraordinarily busy people. We explained that public and community service has always been central to Riker Danzig’s culture. “We strongly believe in the importance of pro bono and charitable work in our communities, and encourage it. In fact, in May our Firm is being honored by the ACLU for our contributions to the representation of Indonesian Christian residents of Central Jersey targeted by ICE. A member of our Insurance Department is one of the key members of Riker’s team for that project. To make sure that our attorneys understand our commitment to pro bono activities, we recently changed our bonus structure to provide credit for a certain amount of pro bono hours toward receipt of bonuses.

“A benefit of practicing law in a place like Morristown is that you can more easily balance your work and your home life. We recognize that work/life balance is important in order for our attorneys to be fulfilled both personally and professionally, and so we support flexibility in terms of fitting in family activities during the work week, while still working hard and providing superior services to meet the needs of our clients.”

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