

New Jersey Law Journal

June 3, 2019

An ALM Publication

LEGAL & LITIGATION DEPARTMENTS OF THE YEAR



Left to right: Partners Tracey K. Wishert, Jeffrey M. Beyer, Co-Chairman of Riker Danzig and Co-Chair of the Firm's Insurance and Reinsurance Group Brian E. O'Donnell, Partner Anthony J. Zarillo, Jr., Co-Managing Partner of the Firm and Co-Chair of its Insurance and Reinsurance Group Lance J. Kalik, Partners Glenn D. Curving, Maura C. Smith and Michael J. Rossignol

RIKER DANZIG
SCHERER HYLAND
& PERRETTI LLP

WINNER, INSURANCE (MIDSIZE)
LITIGATION DEPARTMENT OF
THE YEAR

LITIGATORS MUST 'PARTNER WITH CLIENTS EVERY STEP
OF THE WAY,' RIKER DANZIG'S INSURANCE GROUP SAYS

BY DAVID GIALANELLA

The insurance and reinsurance group at Morristown-based Riker Danzig Scherer Hyland & Perretti includes seven partners and five counsel, represents numerous major carriers, and handles cases that not only yield significant results but

also help develop the law. Riker Danzig, in addition to the 2018 Nationwide case noted below, 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.

*** The responses were provided by insurance and reinsurance group cochair Lance J. Kalik, also firm co-managing partner; and group cochair Brian E. O'Donnell, also firm co-chairman. ***

What were some of the department's most satisfying successes of 2018, and why?

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. That being said, we helped our client Nationwide 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.

Being a Litigation Department of the Year means more than providing good counsel. How does your group go a step further for clients?

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.

Amid a changing market for legal services, what does it mean to be an effective litigator in New Jersey?

For our clients, we believe that an effective litigator must constantly assess the case to explore opportunities for resolution in the most cost-effective

“Riker Danzig Scherer Hyland & Perretti handles cases that not only yield significant results but also help develop the law.”

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.

Is it true that clients now more than ever wish to avoid litigation, and if so, how do litigation practices thrive?

If a client wants 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.

Litigators are extraordinarily busy people. What does the firm do to ensure that they remain engaged with pro bono work, their communities and their families?

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.

