

Benesch Nabs High-Stakes Atty Pair From Winston In Chicago

By **Lauraann Wood**

Law360 (October 10, 2018, 8:33 PM EDT) -- J. Erik Connolly and Nicole Wrigley, who have litigated several cases of nationwide interest including a beef product company's high-profile defamation suit against ABC News, have been added to Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP's roster in its Chicago office, the firm has announced.

The two joined the AmLaw 200 business law firm in September after spending about 16 years each at Winston & Strawn LLP, where they worked alongside their mentor Dan Webb, a co-executive chairman at the firm and former U.S. attorney who oversaw the undercover "Operation Greylord" investigation into Cook County judicial corruption in the 1980s. Connolly serves as the vice chair of Benesch's litigation practice group and a member of the firm's executive committee, and Wrigley serves as the vice chair of its trial litigation practice group.

Connolly told Law360 on Wednesday that he and Wrigley have gained immense experience while working with Webb and Winston at large. But he said they decided to move on because Benesch, which has been working in recent years to grow and staff its offices with top legal talent, was offering a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to join an elite team of colleagues and work on complex cases under an "incredibly flexible" rate structure that gives clients a high return on their investment.

"It was the perfect combination of talent, rate flexibility and nimbleness that set Benesch apart as something really special, and we wanted to be a part of it," he said.

Wrigley and Connolly's practice focuses on litigating high-stakes cases in which the damages at issue can range from the hundreds of millions to billions of dollars. One recent example includes their work with Webb representing Beef Products Inc. in a defamation suit over ABC News calling the company's beef product "pink slime" in a series of reports in 2012.

After four weeks of trial in June 2017, ABC agreed to a confidential "amicable settlement" over BPI's claims, and its parent company Disney disclosed in a Form 10-Q two months later that it paid \$177 million connected to a litigation settlement. Disney has since been litigating the question of whether its insurance company should be on the hook to pay \$25 million in the deal, or whether that dispute belongs in arbitration.

Wrigley told Law360 that kind of complex work is directly in her wheelhouse, as she's always seen herself as the type of lawyer who would be standing up in courtrooms and talking to juries. But the lawsuits' complexities are also what keep her in the profession because she enjoys working on and solving challenging matters, she said.

"I like collaboration and solving problems," she said. "As a lawyer, and especially as a litigator, those



J. Erik Connolly



Nicole Wrigley

are things that you do every day as your job, and it's never the same issue or quite the same thing."

With national practices, Connolly told Law360 that their physical location in Chicago doesn't necessarily define their work. But being Midwesterners gives them an edge in humility and respectfulness that allows them to forge meaningful relationships with clients, judges and juries, he said.

"It makes us extremely relatable to people across the nation without having necessarily a particular way or attitude about us," Wrigley said.

--Additional reporting by Rick Archer, John Kennedy, Melissa Daniels and Jeff Sistrunk.