

## Office Snapshot: A Look At Benesch's Del. Outpost

By **Rose Krebs**

Law360 (January 18, 2022, 12:28 PM EST) -- Since 2007, Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP has been expanding its Delaware office to meet client needs on bankruptcy, corporate and other matters, and that growth will continue in 2022, firm leaders told Law360 Pulse.

Benesch opened its Wilmington office in March 2007 "in response to our clients' needs in the bankruptcy area," the firm recently told Law360 Pulse in an email.

"Our Wilmington office is a dynamic slice of the firm's overall national practice. Our Delaware attorneys are established litigators and transactional, insolvency, creditors' rights, real estate and banking law advisors," the firm said. "Because our focus is tied to Delaware's distinctive position in the legal arena, we have a level of autonomy within Benesch and powerful esprit de corps."

At the same time, litigators in the Delaware office take advantage of being part of a more than 300-attorney firm "with a global reach," the firm said.

"Our Wilmington office is young, with room to grow. If attorneys have a burgeoning practice, they can bring it here and have the backing and space to build it aggressively from the start," the firm said. "They can also count on strong teamwork to advance their goals."

Michael J. Barrie, partner and chair of Benesch's insolvency and creditors' rights practice group, told Law360 Pulse in a statement sent via email that the firm started its Delaware office with three attorneys "performing mostly co-counsel bankruptcy work."

"We have grown this office to 11 attorneys in 2021, and we will continue our growth in 2022, performing mostly as lead counsel across all spectrums of litigation and transactional work," Barrie said. "I am very proud of this expansion and our work, which has attracted the highest levels of talent to our office."

Jennifer R. Hoover, partner and administrative partner in Benesch's Wilmington office, told Law360 Pulse in a statement sent via email that, "having joined Benesch at the inception of its Delaware office it has been a tremendous experience to participate in the growth of the office alongside the growth of the firm across all offices."

Attorneys in Benesch's First State office handle cases in Delaware's busy bankruptcy court, and the state's Chancery Court, which adjudicates some of the nation's most complex and high stakes corporate disputes.

### THE LEADER

Hoover is a partner in the firm's litigation and insolvency & creditors' rights practice group. She has "experience in both transactional and litigation aspects of" bankruptcy reorganizations and liquidations, and "regularly represents debtors, Chapter 11 and Chapter 7 trustees, creditors' committees, creditors, lenders, and parties to adversary proceedings," according to the firm's website.



## THE LOCATION



Benesch's Wilmington office moved last year to 1313 North Market St., Suite 1201. Before moving, the office was at 222 Delaware Ave. The new office space is modern and located in "a prime business location with room for us to grow our team," a firm representative said.

## THE TEAM

### **10 TOTAL EMPLOYEES**

(with a law clerk that passed Delaware's bar exam set to be sworn in this week, bringing the total to 11)

7 partners

1 paralegal

3 staff (2 secretaries and an office administrator)

## THE WORK

Among the firm's recent work in significant bankruptcy cases includes representing the official committee of unsecured creditors in **Hertz's Chapter 11** in Delaware bankruptcy court and

representing Bankrupt hemp company GenCanna in its Chapter 11 in Kentucky bankruptcy court.

In Delaware's Chancery Court, Benesch represented American General Resources LLC board members who **escaped a fraud suit** an investor filed against the company, which operates California-based cannabis company Bloom Farms. The investor, in a suit filed in 2020 against American General and two of its board members, had alleged that he'd been duped into investing \$5 million on the basis of shoddy information.

In November, Vice Chancellor Morgan T. Zurn formally tossed the suit, after previously indicating she would dismiss it because of the investor's contumacious conduct, saying "no sanction short of dismissal has been or would be meaningful."

Barrie and Benesch colleague Kate Harmon, both of the firm's Wilmington office, are part of a counsel team representing voting technology provider Smartmatic USA Corp.'s **in defamation suits** filed against conservative media networks One America News Network and Newsmax Media Inc.

The suit against OANN, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, and the suit against Newsmax, filed in Delaware Superior Court, accuse the networks of intentionally peddling election fraud conspiracy theories including unfounded claims that Smartmatic's voting machines rigged votes in favor of President Joe Biden last year.

## COMINGS AND GOINGS

This month, Matthew D. Beebe, a member of the firm's insolvency and creditors' rights and litigation practice groups, **became a partner** at the firm. Beebe focuses his practice on complex restructuring and commercial litigation, the firm said.

Juan Martinez joined the firm's Wilmington office as an associate in September. Martinez "is skilled in conducting legal research concerning various practice areas including bankruptcy law, employment law and tort law," the firm said in an announcement at the time.

Harmon, an associate in the firm's litigation group, was elected vice president of the Delaware State Bar Association in June 2021. Harmon handles "complex commercial litigation, corporate litigation, bankruptcy litigation, corporate governance, entity formation, nonprofit representation, insurance coverage disputes, compliance and intellectual property matters across various state and federal courts," the firm's website said.

Gregory W. Werkheiser, an experienced bankruptcy attorney, joined the firm's Wilmington office in March 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold across the nation. Before joining as a partner at Benesch, Werkheiser worked at Morris Nichols Arsht & Tunnell LLP for more than 20 years, according to his LinkedIn profile.

—Additional reporting by Sarah Jarvis and Khorri Atkinson. Editing by Alex Hubbard.