



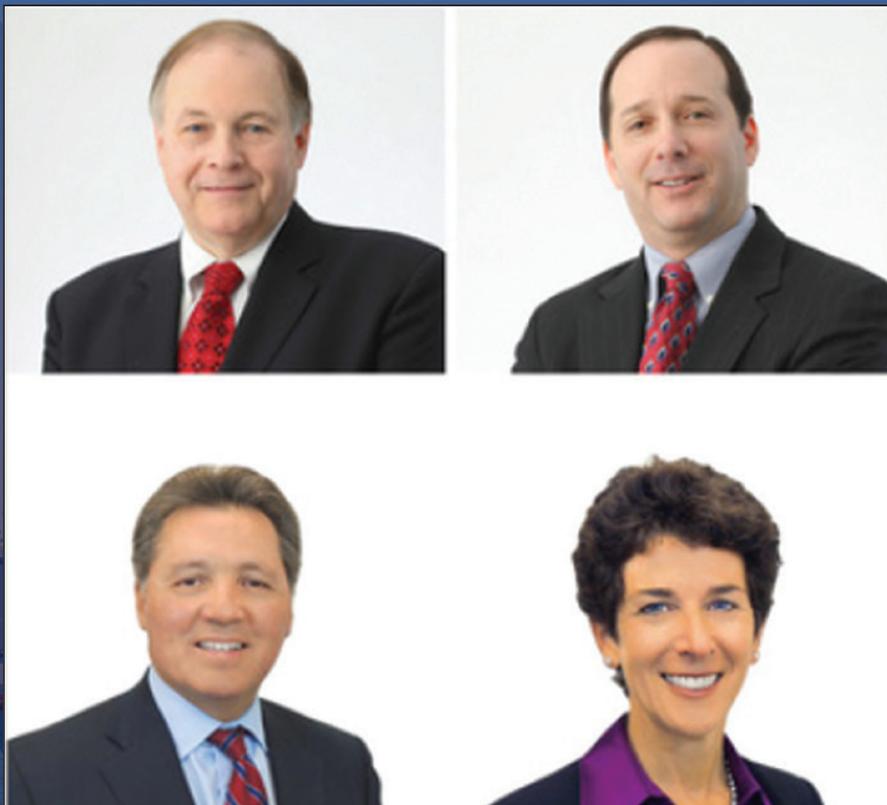
PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

AUGUST 31, 2020

LITIGATION DEPARTMENT OF THE YEAR (MIDSIZE FIRM)

**'A PRIORITY TO UNDERSTAND EACH CLIENT'S BUSINESS GOALS'
DRIVES SUCCESS AT SILLS CUMMIS**

BY DAVID GIALANELLA



**SILLS CUMMIS
& GROSS P.C.**

WINNER, GENERAL LITIGATION
DEPARTMENT OF THE YEAR

Clockwise from top left: Joseph Buckley, Richard Epstein, Beth Rose, Joseph Fiorenzo

'A Priority to Understand Each Client's Business Goals' Drives Success at Sills Cummis

"Putting our clients' needs first has been a founding principle at Sills Cummis since its inception in 1971. We make it a priority to understand each client's business goals and objectives, and handle lawsuits in a manner that makes their lives easier and meets their business goals."

Sills Cummis & Gross, including litigation department chair Joseph L. Buckley, litigation department cochair and firm deputy managing partner Richard H. Epstein, litigation department cochair Joseph B. Fiorenzo, and litigation department cochair and product liability practice chair Beth S. Rose, is this year's Litigation Department of the Year for general litigation, midsize firm.

*** The responses below were provided by Buckley and edited lightly for style. ***

What are some of the department's most satisfying successes of 2019, and why?

The many noteworthy successes for our clients in 2019 include representing a neurosurgery practice in connection with the revocation of their staff privileges by Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, New Jersey; a Bergen County jury returned a unanimous verdict against Valley Hospital and awarded our client \$24.3 million. We successfully represented a medical solutions and products company in a multi-million dollar lease dispute lawsuit in connection with its U.S. headquarters in New Jersey. We won a bench trial in December on behalf of a very large shopping mall operator. In 2019 the Supreme Court of the United States granted certiorari in our clients' case, the second time SCOTUS granted certiorari in our clients' cases in the past several years. In both instances, SCOTUS ruled in our clients' favor. Success for us is meeting, and exceeding, client expectations. Also, winning the New Jersey Law Journal Litigation Department of the Year award for the second year in a row ranks high among our recent successes!

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

Putting our clients' needs first has been a founding principle at Sills Cummis since its inception in 1971. We make it a priority to understand each client's business goals and objectives, and handle lawsuits in a manner that makes their lives easier and meets their business goals. We also take more cases to trial and arbitrations than most firms of our size and quality engaged in the practice of business law. Our trial-readiness and track record of success give our clients greater leverage to achieve favorable settlements whether the case is in discovery or on the proverbial courthouse steps.

In 2020, the coronavirus has brought big changes to law practice. What have been some of your department's adaptations?

For many of our clients, the coronavirus pandemic has greatly changed their lives; in many instances they are now living at work – they are under extreme pressure and putting in even more hours. We are touching base with them to check on their well-being and to see how we can help them.

The transition from litigating in the office to litigating from home was seamless. Our litigation attorneys continue to provide excellent service to our clients, whether in the office or from home. We are regularly "meeting" with clients over Zoom, and our monthly in-person litigation department meetings have changed to bi-weekly Zoom meetings. Our department's productivity for the last two months equaled the department's productivity for the same two months last year.

The market for legal services has been changing since well before 2020. What does success require in this climate?

Individualized client service at the highest level continues to be our number one goal. An ongoing trend for success is providing clients with reliable budgets and providing case updates on the client's preferred schedule. Clients increasingly prefer to participate alongside us in tactical and strategic decisions, which makes it even more important that they are updated on their preferred schedule and by their preferred means of communication.

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?

The firm has always encouraged all attorneys to give back, especially in the Greater Newark community where Sills Cummis is headquartered, in ways that are meaningful to them. The ways our litigators give back varies greatly and ranges from volunteering at soup kitchens to mentoring students to pro bono litigation. Our litigators are encouraged to make decisions about the best way to stay engaged in family life and within their communities, while meeting client needs. ■