

Pennsylvania Powerhouse: Buchanan Ingersoll

By **Rachel Rippetoe**

Law360 (August 22, 2023, 2:36 PM EDT) -- Having opened in the Steel City in 1850, Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC is proud to be "Pittsburgh born," firm Chairman and CEO Joseph Dougherty told Law360.

Over 150 years in Pennsylvania — the firm also eventually opened offices in Philadelphia in 1985 and Harrisburg in 1988 — has entrenched Buchanan Ingersoll in the Keystone State. This history has placed the full-service firm of 400 lawyers nationwide and 218 in Pennsylvania at the center of several multimillion- and billion-dollar deals that have shaped health care, academics, energy and more in the state, earning the firm a spot on Law360's list of Pennsylvania Powerhouses for 2023.



"With our platform and our offices, we truly cover all Pennsylvania," Dougherty said. "We're really proud of it. We have a great community presence, a great client base. We punch above our weight and our value is better than some of the larger firms that are coming in, and we just have the infrastructure."

Shaping the State

Buchanan Ingersoll has four industry teams representing the most important sectors across the country, but particularly in Pennsylvania: health care, energy, financial institutions and life sciences. Within those teams is a cross-section of practice areas: tax, mergers and acquisitions, regulatory law, and litigation.

"It gives us a more versatile, better rounded team to provide to the client," Dougherty said. "And it's not like they're learning the industry for the first time when they start on a new project. I think it brings better advice to the client. We're more efficient."

The industry teams also allow the firm to dig deep into multimillion-dollar deals for major players in the state, helping their clients with all facets of a deal.

In the last year and a half, the firm has helped finalize a merger between Excela Health and Butler Health System; facilitated an academic merger between Philadelphia's University of the Sciences and Saint Joseph's University; and led the sale of privately owned Guttman Energy under an employee stock ownership plan that "really turned it into an employee-owned business," Dougherty said.

"We're proud that we're getting the opportunity to work on these types of deals that have a positive

impact on the community," he said. "We try to put together our best teams to make sure that from the legal standpoint, we give these projects the best chance of success, that the transaction actually happens and happens in a way that's effective and of value to the client."

The academic merger in Philadelphia, which closed in June 2022, felt especially rewarding, Dougherty said. Mergers between higher-education institutions are rare and, in this case, the firm was really helping to revitalize client University of the Sciences, which was facing declining enrollment along with other financial difficulties.

The two-year merger involved a lot of moving parts, Dougherty said, including getting many approvals from governmental entities ranging from the U.S. Department of Education to the Federal Trade Commission.

"It's not like two manufacturing plants combining together in a private deal: 'Boom, boom, and off you go,'" he said. "It took a long time to do, it was that complicated. But there was a lot of motivation from both of the schools to get that done."

The deal ultimately resulted in a combined university with an endowment of more than \$500 million and more than 200 academic programs.

The firm, in September 2022, also represented real estate investment firm Golden East Investors in buying the former Heinz Pittsburgh manufacturing campus out of bankruptcy, aiming to transform it into an urban space made up of nine mixed-use buildings spread across 20 acres of the city's North Shore.

Creating Culture

Dougherty said he's also proud of the strides the firm has made in diversity and inclusion. The firm has a diversity corporate share program, which pairs summer associates with a participating corporation for a two-to-four-week period. It also hosts a podcast called "Dimensions of Diversity" dedicated to diversity and inclusion issues.

"It's nice to attract more diverse talent because everybody needs more of that," Dougherty said. "Everybody in the firm has been really receptive and really interested and that kind of speaks to our culture. It's nice when you present these opportunities and people are jumping on board and are interested."

The firm has also been working, in general, on creating a positive working environment for attorneys. To encourage collaboration, the head of the Pittsburgh office Jaime Tuite started monthly all-attorney-meetings.

"We started these as we moved back into the office to encourage open communication, team building and mentoring," she told Law360. "We ask various Pittsburgh leaders to share their best practices, client relationship insights and how they are involved in the community."

In Philadelphia, office head Marc Tepper told Law360 the office hosts a "day of service" event in which the firm works with a local charity.

"I firmly believe that our culture is the reason for the office's steady growth," he said. "We are proud of

who we are, and everyone here has had a hand in our success."

Embracing Technology

Another development at Buchanan Ingersoll in the last few years has been the full-bodied support of technology, Dougherty said.

"You can either sit back and wait for others to kind of figure it out and jump in, you can ignore it, or you can embrace it, and we have really wholeheartedly embraced technology," he said. "We see it as a way for us to be ourselves and remain competitive with much bigger firms."

The firm launched a "digital solutions center" called BuchananInnovate in July, with the goal of building up the firm's data analytics and business intelligence, getting attorneys familiar with artificial intelligence, bulking up the firm's cybersecurity and enhancing the client's digital experience.

"We've spent a lot of time, not just kind of figuring out data analytics, but how we apply it to some of our practice groups to make them more efficient, to use information that we can then go out to clients and say we looked at the last 35 transactions and the last 35 cases, and here's some patterns we're seeing," Dougherty said.

The firm also created a sandbox for lawyers to learn how to use AI. Dougherty said Buchanan Ingersoll isn't using AI for legal matters yet, but it could be headed in that direction.

"We don't think it's there yet," he said. "But we want lawyers to begin to get comfortable with it."

The firm is also building out dashboards that can help improve the client experience, Dougherty said, keeping them up to date on due dates and budgets, among other things.

"We're doing it so that it deepens client relationships and shows them that we're invested in our clients," he said.

--Editing by Andrew Cohen.