

## Pennsylvania Powerhouse: Buchanan Ingersoll

By **Matthew Santoni**

Law360 (September 2, 2025, 4:00 PM EDT) -- As the United States prepares for its 250th anniversary celebration, Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC marked its 175th year in 2025 by finding a new home for Philadelphia's SS United States, along with closing labor deals and mergers with a strong impact on the state's economy, setting precedent in environmental litigation and defending its hometown health network's employment contracts.



The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had been a state for just 74 years when the law firm that would become Buchanan Ingersoll was founded in Pittsburgh in 1850. For its effects on the Keystone State's economic and legal landscape, Buchanan Ingersoll has been selected as one of **Law360's Regional Powerhouses** for 2025.

Founded by Whig-party Congressman Moses Hampton and his son, the firm has expanded to multiple states but remains strong in Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania, said James D. Newell, chairman and CEO, who took over the top post in 2024.

"We still have conference rooms named for Moses Hampton here," Newell told Law360. "We've become more than just a Pittsburgh firm, but we really view ourselves ... as having extremely strong ties with the business community."

More than 230 of Buchanan Ingersoll's 450 attorneys are based in Pennsylvania, with the majority of those in the firm's headquarters in downtown Pittsburgh's historic Union Trust Building. In addition to Pittsburgh, the law firm has offices in Philadelphia, Harrisburg and its newest Pennsylvania location, King of Prussia, which stemmed from its 2024 merger with boutique IP firm RatnerPrestia.

"In our Pittsburgh office, we have been helping businesses navigate complex issues for 175 years, and we continue to reinforce what has made Buchanan strong: deep connections with the business community,

emphasis on client service, and focus on developing the next generation of legal talent," said Jaime Tuite, shareholder and head of the Pittsburgh office.

One recent victory for the Pittsburgh office was upholding employment contracts for Allegheny Health Network in June 2024, when former Allegheny Clinic physician Shyam Thakkar claimed his contract entitled him to 180 days' notice before he could be terminated, but a bench trial established that the clinic had a provision that it could "modify" his employment provision — including deciding not to renew it — with only 90 days' notice.

"We are dedicated to rigorously advocating for our clients, and the AHN/Allegheny Clinic matter is a great example of our commitment to see cases through trial," Tuite said.

But it was in Philadelphia where the law firm made its most publicly visible splash: representing the operator of a wharf where the derelict 1950s-era ocean liner SS United States had sat for decades in the hope of restoration.

Bigger than the Titanic and boasting a trans-Atlantic speed record that still stands today, the SS United States had been built as a luxury liner with the ability to be swiftly converted into a troopship. But once jet flights and ever-larger cruise liners took over the trade and a series of owners were unable to revive her, the ship sat rusting away along the Delaware River, with the conservancy that owned it falling behind after the wharf operator, Buchanan Ingersoll client Penn Warehousing & Distribution, increased its dockage fees.

Newell said the firm could have just settled for having the ship unceremoniously scrapped to pay a portion of its debts, but a vessel with that name and history deserved better.

"It would have been an ignominious end," he said.

So the firm **worked with the parties** to find a new home for the vessel in Oskaloosa County, Florida, where it will be sunk off the coast to become an artificial reef and an attraction for divers.

"In Philadelphia, we are a city of firsts, so it was fitting for our Philadelphia office to represent a dispute that combined the law, local interests, and a ship's legacy with no equal," said Marc Tepper, shareholder and head of Buchanan Ingersoll's Philadelphia office. "We like to think the Buchanan Philadelphia office takes the same pride and commitment today with all our clients through the same innovative approach that our national government took back in the era when the SS United States was built."

In another first, Buchanan Ingersoll represented Coterra Energy Inc. in a case where Pennsylvania's Environmental Hearing Board issued its first-ever sanctions against an attorney for her alleged misconduct on an environmental appeal.

The Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania in November **upheld the EHB's 2022 order** that Lisa Johnson of Lisa Johnson & Associates and her clients had to pay Coterra \$18,600 in legal fees stemming from claims that Cabot Oil had contaminated the clients' well water.

The EHB is not an official state court, but is the first stop for appeals of decisions by the state Department of Environmental Protection and has some court-like rules, including that attorneys and clients must be submitting their claims and documents in good faith. The appellate court had found it was within the board's power to sanction Johnson for allegedly trying to delay her clients' case by falsely implying that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office were going to discuss getting involved.

Johnson had specifically opposed the involvement of Buchanan Ingersoll's attorneys on the case and had **refused to let her clients be cross-examined** by them during the board hearing.

Newell said the Commonwealth Court ruling "leveled the playing field" for litigants in environmental appeals and made it harder for allegedly bad-faith litigation before the board.

"We expect plaintiffs to be aggressive ... but within the guidelines of ethics and the law," he said.

In the middle of the state, Buchanan Ingersoll helped negotiate a new contract between Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and the Service Employees International Union, heading off the threat of a strike by thousands of nurses at a major regional health center.

"That would have been a difficult situation for the people of Pennsylvania," Newell said, noting the facility's

importance as both a healthcare provider and an employer.

The new contract runs through 2027 and includes yearly wage increases, enhanced parental leave, increased time off and new commitments to increase staffing, the firm announced.

"We are key players in matters like the Penn State Health union contract negotiations, which are critical to the region's success, and the office serves a strategic purpose for all our clients who want to do business in Pennsylvania," said Jayson Wolfgang, a shareholder and head of the Harrisburg office. He further touted the benefits of the firm's office in the state capitol, which also includes representatives of Buchanan Ingersoll's lobbying and advocacy arm.

"We help clients navigate issues before agencies like the Pennsylvania Insurance Department; the Departments of Health, Human Services and Education; and the Public Utility Commission, Environmental Hearing Board," Wolfgang said. "Our office can support clients before each branch of government — the judicial branch through our litigation team, and the executive and legislative branches through our government relations practice."

Buchanan Ingersoll also helped guide major acquisitions in the last year, Newell said. In July 2024, Pittsburgh-area client Calgon Carbon Corp., a subsidiary of Kuraray Co. Ltd., closed on its acquisition of Houston-based Sprint Environmental Services LLC. Sprint focuses its business on "reactivated" carbon — taking material that's already been used for applications such as air or water filtration and treating it to be reused.

The firm and the companies touted the acquisition as a means of expanding Calgon Carbon's business and its physical footprint beyond the East Coast, and Newell noted its importance as a regional employer in Western Pennsylvania.

Beyond the firm's client work, Newell said Buchanan Ingersoll had spent the last year transitioning leadership. In addition to his ascent to CEO, he said the firm had named seven new board members, two new executive shareholders and a new chief operating officer.

While the firm was joining many industries in exploring the use of artificial intelligence models in the workplace, Newell said human judgment would always be part of the process.

"Every firm's talking about AI, but you need to season that with lawyers and chairs using their judgment," he said.

As the state and the firm both move ahead in their shared history, Newell told Law360 that he was hoping to keep balancing between the firm's focus on the past and its future.

"We really are looking at making sure our leadership is consistent in terms of continuing the legacy of the firm," he said, later adding, "175 years doesn't come by accident."

--Editing by Dave Trumbore.