

Attorney Spotlight: Brian Donnelly

May 5, 2022

Brian J. Donnelly is a partner in the firm's General Liability, Tort and Insurance Defense department. Over his 36 years of practice, Brian has tried numerous high exposure cases in both state and federal court. Many of these cases have drawn attention from the media including the first case to go to trial of a firefighter involved in the post 9/11 recovery efforts at the World Trade Center site. Brian also coordinates the response of self-insured retail and transportation clients to catastrophic incidents. He is the supervising partner for cases involving some of the largest self-insured retail and transportation companies in the United States. Learn more about Brian's career and background through the Attorney Spotlight below:

Why did you become an attorney?

After college I worked as a US Customs Inspector which at the time was under the US Department of the Treasury. Having that experience in law-enforcement sparked my interest in the legal profession and ultimately led to law school and my first job as an Assistant District Attorney in Nassau County. I always had a keen interest in law-enforcement and was privileged to take my experience from the federal government to the District Attorney's office and ultimately to apply my law enforcement background to civil practice. The investigative skills I learned in law-enforcement have been invaluable in conducting targeted investigations on behalf of my clients.

What is your biggest professional achievement?

From my earliest days in The Nassau County District Attorney's office, I have always enjoyed trying cases. To me, being a trial attorney is my most significant professional achievement. As a result of that, I have lectured across the country on a broad range of topics within the field of trial advocacy. In recognition of my 36 years of jury trials, I became a member of ABOTA, The American Board of Trial Advocates, an invitation only organization that honors some of the most experienced trial lawyers in the United States.

What activities do you participate in outside of the firm?

I am a member of the New York State Bar Association for whom I have presented numerous seminars over the years. I am also a member of the Nassau County Bar Association and I'm particularly gratified by my participation in their Student Mentor Program where I serve as a mentor to at risk youths. I was honored to be recognized by the Irish Legal 100, an annual compilation of the most distinguished legal professionals throughout the United States. One amazing aspect of this organization was being invited to the Irish Embassy in Washington DC this past fall where I met the Irish ambassador to the United States, Daniel Mulhall.

What is your favorite thing about Cullen and Dykman LLP?

What impresses me most about the firm is the depth of talent of the firm's nearly two hundred lawyers and the firm's longevity. The firm has been serving clients since 1850, 172 years and going strong, which is a testament to the quality of the firm's representation of its clients.

What has been the most impactful advice you have received about practicing law?

The most important advice I received in my career was to never let your adversary outwork you. For me that has been most impactful in my trial practice. Depending on the complexity and exposure to my client in a case, my trial preparation typically starts months in advance. You cannot be effective in the Courtroom without peeling back every layer in a case. I particularly enjoy working with my experts to refine our theory of the case and to bring laser focus to the cross examination of adverse experts. I have always believed that a trial is a battle for control of the Courtroom, and extensive pre-trial preparation is critical to winning that battle.

About Cullen and Dykman's General Liability, Tort and Insurance Defense Department

Our litigation attorneys represent individuals and corporations in general liability, tort and insurance defense matters ranging from personal injury and insurance coverage disputes to large-scale commercial litigation. Clients frequently engage our litigators to act as trial counsel in high-exposure cases, and we have extensive experience in appellate litigation involving liability and insurance matters.

About Cullen and Dykman

Cullen and Dykman (www.cullenllp.com) has been providing legal services to institutional clients since 1850. The firm represents a wide range of clients, including banks and other financial institutions, energy, telecommunications and water companies, construction companies, insurers, educational institutions, religious organizations, and not-for-profits. With over 190 attorneys in seven offices located throughout the Northeast and Mid Atlantic regions, Cullen and Dykman is strategically positioned to meet the changing needs and demands of our clients.

Practices

- General Liability, Tort and Insurance Defense

Attorneys

- Brian J. Donnelly