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## Merger expands Porter Wright's Midwest name

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Columbus, Ohio-based Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP expanded into the Chicago market earlier this month.

The merger with Butler Rubin Saltarelli & Boyd LLP brings an end to the local litigation boutique, which was founded in 1980.

Porter Wright managing partner Robert J. Tannous said the firm has gained insurance clients, such as Old Republic Insurance Co. and Fairfax Financial, that can now tap into the resources available from a full-service firm.

"Our feeling was that adding Chicago to our Midwest footprint would be beneficial to our existing clients in terms of being able to provide them greater services as well as giving us an opportunity to have access to a new client base for us," Tannous said.

Chicago is Porter Wright's eighth location. The firm also has offices in Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Dayton, Ohio, Washington, D.C., Naples, Fla., and Pittsburgh.

Butler Rubin's merger contributes to the growing number of a boutique litigation firms in the city in recent years that have joined forces with large, national firms.

Last year, Chicago boutiques Bronson & Kahn LLC and Shaw

Fishman Glantz & Towbin LLC merged with Much Shelist P.C. and Fox Rothschild LLP, respectively.

The city has also seen new boutiques launch in the past year. For example, a new corporate boutique firm, Fairchild Morgan Law in Lake Forest, formed as a merger between Morgan Legal Group, founded by Geoffrey R. Morgan, and Fairchild Law Offices, established by Jessica B. Fairchild.

Robert J. Palmersheim and Anand C. Mathew left Honigman LLP in July to start a litigation boutique, Palmersheim & Mathew.

A total of 17 Butler Rubin's attorneys remain at the merged firm, said Robert N. Hermes, a former Butler Rubin partner who is now partner in charge of Porter Wright's Chicago office.

Butler Rubin's attorney headcount had fallen from more than 30 attorneys in 2015 to roughly 18 in 2019.

Hermes said the headcount happened naturally over two years and was driven in part by partner retirements and two lawyers moving to in-house practices as well as some attrition among associates.

"It was a combination of retirements and two lawyers going in-house with clients that created an interest for lateral partners," Hermes said.

Efforts to recruit qualified



**Robert N. Hermes**

lateral partners had also become more challenging in the past year, Hermes said.

He said the firm leaders were initially opposed to a merger when the idea was raised about a year ago.

But, Hermes said, they were open to a merger prospect that "would provide an opportunity for us to keep doing what we're doing, in the way we've been doing it, with the benefits of a big firm."

Ultimately, Hermes said, the merger amounted to a combination where "one plus one is something more than two."

"That's really the only reason to do this," Hermes said. "It doesn't do us any good to simply park our practice under a different name."

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