

Porter Wright Opens Tampa Shop With Former Freeborn Attys

By **Madison Arnold**

Law360 (February 1, 2023, 4:32 PM EST) -- Porter Wright has opened its first new office in Florida in more than 35 years with the addition of a five-attorney litigation team from Freeborn & Peters LLP ahead of that firm's pending merger with Smith Gambrell & Russell LLP.

Central Ohio-based Porter Wright announced its new Tampa office Wednesday, adding that the five attorneys will bolster the firm's insurance brokerage counseling and litigation capabilities, as well as its reinsurance, restrictive covenants and other complex commercial litigation services. Tampa is Porter Wright's ninth office across the U.S. and its second Florida office, following the opening of a Naples outpost in 1987.

The attorneys joining the Tampa office are Larry Ingram, who serves as partner-in-charge, as well as partners Jessica Alley, Christina Flatau and Melissa Murphy. Attorney Michael Kelly will join the firm's offices in Chicago and Tampa.

"We're very excited about joining Porter Wright and founding an office here in Tampa. We found it to be a vibrant, growing firm with a vision," Ingram said in an interview with Law360 Pulse on Wednesday. "The Midwest flavor [of the firm] was also important for us. The agile size of the firm and its visionary leadership was all very attractive."

Ingram is a Midwest native himself being from Indiana. He said he's noticed a pipeline from the middle part of the country to the western coast of Florida. Because of that, Porter Wright's Midwest connections were a plus for him.

"On the west coast of Florida, you will find a lot of folks from the Midwest, from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois. And I believe it's because of the migration patterns, and so we've always found that there's nice cultural connection between the west coast of Florida and the Midwest. That was an important consideration for me personally," Ingram said.

All the attorneys previously worked at Freeborn & Peters, which recently announced a pending merger with Smith Gambrell.



Larry Ingram



Jessica Alley



Christina Flatau

"We are excited to grow our presence in Florida, bringing our depth of services to the thriving community of Tampa," Bob Tannous, managing partner at Porter Wright, said in a statement. "Our new Tampa colleagues bring abundant experiences in key sectors, and we are fortunate to have them as part of our team."

Ingram's practice involves handling professional business disputes relating to trade secrets and restrictive covenants, professional liability defense, third-party insurance coverage, qui tam and health care fraud. He graduated from Stetson University College of Law and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of South Florida, according to his profile on the firm's website.

"I really enjoy meeting my clients, understanding their business, understanding the context and stressors of their business and I get the most enjoyment out of helping them solve problems. That's really the most gratifying thing that I do," Ingram said.

Alley's work is centered on representing clients in the insurance, legal and health care industries, according to her profile. She earned her law degree from Florida State University College of Law and a bachelor's degree from Stetson University.

Flatau focuses her practice on business and commercial litigation, and she has experience litigating claims such as breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty and enforcement of restrictive covenants, according to her profile. She is a graduate of the University of Miami School of Law and holds a bachelor's degree from Trinity University.

Murphy's practice involves helping clients in complex business and commercial litigation, professional liability and contract disputes, the firm said. She is also a Florida State University College of Law graduate and holds a bachelor's degree from the same university.

Finally, Kelly has more than 30 years of experience and aides clients with complex litigation cases related to antitrust, contract, insurance, intellectual property and trade secrets, according to his profile. His law degree is from the DePaul University College of Law while his bachelor's degree is from the University of Notre Dame.

"Jessica Alley, Melissa Murphy and Christina Flatau, they are some of the best attorneys I've ever practiced with," Ingram said. "[They're] really good at insurance brokerage litigation and counseling, and commercial litigation. Jessica has done some huge qui tam cases, insurance coverage. [They're] just fantastic attorneys. Mr. Kelly, of course, was the former managing partner of the Freeborn firm in Chicago ... and he's just an all around top-notch bet-the-company case litigation attorney, so I feel like we've got a very strong team."

Porter Wright is a full service law firm. In recent years, through a series of mergers, it opened an office in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 2017 and Chicago in 2019.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.



Melissa Murphy



Michael Kelly