

Porter Wright Morris & Arthur Lands in Tampa With Litigation Team From Freeborn & Peters

by **Alexander Lugo**

What You Need to Know

- Porter Wright is opening an office in Tampa, its second Florida location and its ninth overall.
- The office is opening as Porter Wright sees more and more clients moving to Florida.
- The five-person team focuses on litigation surrounding insurance and other complex business matters.

Ohio-based Porter Wright has flagged Tampa for its second Florida outpost, opening with a litigation team from Chicago-based Freeborn & Peters.

The five-person team consists of Larry Ingram, joining as partner-in-charge, in addition to Jessica Alley, Christina Flatau and Melissa Murphy, who will all serve as partners. Michael Kelly is also joining with the expectation of splitting his time between the Chicago and Tampa offices.

The second Florida location comes about 30 years after the firm opened its Naples office and marks the firm's ninth location in total.

The office is opening at a time when the firm is seeing increased activity in Florida, said managing partner Bob Tannous.

"Businesses are migrating in to the

state, so we see that as an opportunity for transactional work, we definitely see real estate work, all of the basic needs that you would have, litigation, trusts and estates, tax planning and those sorts of things," he said.

More specifically, Tannous' firm has seen many Midwesterners moving down to the Sunshine State, some of whom are already clients.

"We have instances where we may have a client who sells a business and the plan is to move down to Florida and sort of rethink what they're going to do. And I think that you can figure out that you can only play so many rounds of golf," he said. "They look for other business opportunities, so I think that has always been great because they're familiar with our firm and it has helped us build our practice in that area."

Tannous also said the firm is seeing growing demand in the firm's hometown of Columbus, Ohio, and he's excited about the opportunities Kelly will present to the firm in both Tampa and Chicago.

The group as a whole covers insurance brokerage counseling, reinsurance, restrictive covenants, and other complex commercial litigation matters.

"My colleagues and I are excited to be part of the Porter Wright team," Ingram said in a press release. "Porter Wright's outstanding national reputation and deep



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Downtown city panoramic skyline view of Tampa looking over the Hillsborough Bay and the Riverwalk.

reservoir of talent across the country will benefit our clients and the entire Tampa community."

The team's exit comes after Freeborn & Peters merged with Atlanta-based Smith, Gambrell & Russell late last month, which caused conflicts among the attorneys, according to Freeborn.

"The practices in Tampa are growing and stronger than ever with the combined firm, where we will gain additional presence and bench with the expanded platform in the state and nationally," said Joseph McCullough, chair of Freeborn's executive committee. "Any time you have a combination of this size, there are bound to be conflicts and rate issues and attorneys who decide not to stay. We're fortunate it has been minimal in our case, but unfortunately those issues impacted these lawyers. We wish them all the best."