

Connecticut **Law**Tribune

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*The Connecticut
Law Tribune
Announces*

*Litigation
Department
OF THE Year*

Ryan Ryan Deluca

LITIGATION DEPARTMENT OF THE YEAR
Insurance Litigation

Numbers Add Up To Courtroom Success

RYAN RYAN DELUCA

touts statistics proving its defense prowess

By **CHRISTIAN NOLAN**

When prospective clients call Ryan Ryan Deluca, they won't just be given a list of superlatives describing the firm's work in a particular area of the law, such as medical malpractice defense or insurance defense.

Instead, the Stamford firm can provide real numbers, such as the number of cases of a certain type handled since 2002. And almost assuredly, the firm will have an impressive winning percentage.

In 2012 alone, the firm brought in 506 new cases, tried 14 cases to verdict, with 11 being defense verdicts and a 12th case coming in for less money than the final offer to settle. That's an 86 percent winning percentage. In 2011, the victory rate was 75 percent. "We do have a set of internal metrics, which are very important to us," said Charles A. "Chuck" Deluca, a partner at the firm, who has been there since the late 1970s.

Rather than tell prospective clients, "Yes, we handle those types



Member of Ryan Ryan Deluca litigation team. Front row: Catherine Nietzel, Chuck Deluca, Mike Ryan. Back Row: Dan Ryan III, Jamie Mahar, John Costa, Kevin Tepas, Rob Laney, Jim Noonan, Bob Hickey.

of cases," the firm can respond: "We've handled x number of cases over the last five years, because we keep track of that type of metrics," continued Deluca. "We're able to quantify our experience and our trial experience as well for potential clients. We've spent a lot of time to make sure we're collecting appropriate information from new cases that come in and when they close so we know exactly how much time

has been spent on a case and keep track of the trial results."

With its success rate, and its ability to quantify it, Ryan Ryan Deluca has won the *Law Tribune's* Litigation Department of the Year Award in the Insurance Litigation category.

Growing And Evolving

Ryan Ryan Deluca has been around for over 50 years, starting out as a general practice firm in the

suburbs. In different eras, it was called Ryan Ryan & Ryan and Ryan Ryan & Hickey.

“When I joined the firm in 1977, we had two lawyers doing litigation and I was the third,” said Deluca. “We represented three insurance companies at the time. Over the course of the years, that has evolved from three lawyers to the 30 we have now.”

Deluca said the firm, which has 10 litigation partners and 20 associates, now does a lot of work for insurance companies and a fair amount of commercial litigation, such as employment law and contract disputes. It even authors the A.M. Best book, *Connecticut Digest of Insurance Laws*.

“We represent a lot of health care providers through medical malpractice, a lot of lawyers in legal malpractice, a large commuter railroad [Metro-North],” said Robert C.E. Laney, the firm’s managing partner. “We represent several grocery store chains and other types of entities. It’s a broad mix, if you can get sued for it, we’ve probably worked in it in one way or another at some point.”

Often, it’s insurance companies’ money at stake should the plaintiffs win. In fact, the law firm now represents more than 75 insurance carriers and has handled lawsuits alleging insurer wrongful denial of coverage, bad faith and improper claims handling. The firm has represented insurers in Oxycontin and asbestosis litigation, and regularly handles environmental, product liability, construction, automobile and homeowners cases.

Deluca said the firm’s focus and growth has just sort of evolved over time and was not part of any master plan. “Ninety-nine percent of our cases come to us,” said Deluca. “We don’t go out looking for it. We have so much to do, there’s hardly enough time to go out and do the marketing most firms would like to do.”

Laney said most of the lawyers focus on two or three primary areas of the law.

“We’re at an interesting size,” said Laney. “We’re still small enough to do most everything by consensus but large enough to have some heft, a deep bench, and deploy forces in a lot of different ways. In terms of management, most of the firm’s major decisions are made by four or five of the partners.”

Deluca said the firm’s first landmark case was defending Paul Newman in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Deluca explained that Newman, who lived in Westport, had launched Newman’s Own salad dressings and was sued by Julius Gold, who alleged that the celebrity movie actor had promised to give him an 8 percent cut of the profits on the dressings for helping him develop and market the dressings.

The first trial, Deluca said, was declared a mistrial in 1988 after three weeks of testimony. During deliberations, jurors sent a note to Superior Court Judge Howard Zoarski saying they couldn’t ignore deposi-

Litigation Department OF THE Year

RYAN RYAN DELUCA

	Total Firm	CT Office(s)
Litigation Partners	10	10
Litigation Associates	20	20
Other Attorneys	2	2
% Total Revenue From Litigation	98%	98%

NOMINATION HIGHLIGHT: Ryan, Ryan Deluca is a litigation law firm with over a 50-year history in Connecticut. The firm’s focus is on insurance- and business-related litigation. The firm has tried hundreds of court and jury cases to conclusion – averaging 15 to 20 jury verdicts per year. We serve as trial counsel and local counsel in Connecticut for a number of businesses and insurance carriers. Our attorneys are battle tested and we have cases pending in virtually every courthouse in the state.

The firm represents more than 75 insurance carriers and has handled cases involving Oxycontin and asbestos litigation, as well as environmental, product liability, construction, automobile and homeowners claims.

tions that were not admitted as evidence but were inadvertently given to them during deliberations. The second trial, a couple years later, resulted in a complete defense verdict in Bridgeport Superior Court.

Shocking Verdict

The verdicts, especially defense verdicts, have been coming in right along ever since. In just the past year, the firm has successfully defended two major claims against Metro North, including one by a rail worker who sought \$16 million for injuries he claimed stemmed from electric shocks he received

while working on the electrified train lines.

The firm successfully defended numerous other medical providers in malpractice claims, including a Stamford area gastroenterology office and Dr. Robert Dettmer, who was sued by the estate of a man who died of colon cancer and was treated at Dettmer's office prior to his death. The plaintiffs claimed a colonoscopy should have been done at the pre-cancer stage, which would have detected pre-cancerous lesions.

The plaintiffs sought more than \$1.2 million but Ryan Ryan Deluca

was able to prove that the doctor was not liable, that the deceased man had a colonoscopy two years before his 2004 symptoms developed and that the doctor performed other appropriate tests this time around.

To Deluca and Laney, the firm's future looks bright. The firm has grown in size over the years, has international clients and national firms bring it in as local counsel. "We more or less do what we do," said Laney. "We'll keep heading on the same path in which we've been going for the last 20, 25 years." ■

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