

RHODE ISLAND
Lawyers Weekly

Rhode Island

**GO TO
Lawyers**

Letter from the Publisher



Dear readers,

Welcome to Rhode Island Go To Lawyers, a new feature that showcases leaders in the Rhode Island legal community by practice area.

For 2021, we’ve chosen to focus on labor and employment, commercial real estate, environmental, education, business, trusts and estates, and insurance defense lawyers. The attorneys featured here were all nominated by their colleagues and chosen by a panel from Lawyers Weekly. We expect that some readers will argue that there are some excellent lawyers who should have been included. Let us know! And please nominate them for future lists.

Susan A. Bocamazo, Esq.
Publisher
Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly

2021 Go To Lawyers

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RHODE ISLAND Lawyers Weekly

Publisher

Susan A. Bocamazo, Esq.

Editor

Henriette Campagne

Advertising Director

Scott Ziegler

Design Supervisor

Laura Black

Page Designer

Wendy Martin

Ad Designer

Michael Bertani

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TRUSTS & ESTATES

LEON C. BOGHOSSIAN III

Partner, Hinckley, Allen & Snyder
Providence

Leon C. Boghossian III has earned respect in the probate bar over the course of his 35-year career practicing trusts and estates law. This is demonstrated by the referrals the Hinckley, Allen & Snyder partner receives from lawyers within and outside his firm and the frequency with which attorneys from throughout the state call on him to advise on best practices in probate, tax and trust strategies.

Boghossian's practice focuses primarily on assisting clients with various degrees of wealth in planning for the orderly and efficient distribution of their estates upon their deaths, with minimal tax costs.

Boghossian also focuses on efficiently administering clients' estates upon their passing. He is adept at mediating possible inheritance issues, including family disputes, and he also represents clients in planning for disability, including powers of attorney, guardianships, conservatorships, and living trusts.

In addition to his estate planning and administration work, Boghossian is a skilled trusts and estates litigator, with a particular emphasis on obtaining court approval for



trust accountings, trust modifications, and trust terminations. He is also experienced in helping clients minimizing their own assets to pay for long-term care costs, including Medicaid planning.

Beyond his legal practice, Boghossian is involved in civic and charitable endeavors, serving on the boards of the Pawtucket Boys & Girls Club, the Bowdoin Club of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Children's Museum, and is a sought-after speaker on trusts and estates issues, giving frequent presentations to the Rhode Island Bar Association and other organizations. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Chair, trusts & estates law group; recipient, Harold B. Soloveitzik Professional Leadership Award; treasurer, Bowdoin Club of Rhode Island; secretary, John P. Burke Memorial Fund; board member, Pawtucket Boys & Girls Club; member, Board of Overseers, Rhode Island Children's Museum; president and past board member, Sandra Feinstein Gamm Theater

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

ROBERT P. BROOKS

Managing Partner, Adler, Pollock & Sheehan
Providence

Robert P. Brooks has distinguished himself through what others describe as the practical approach he brings to problem resolution and through his calm, confident demeanor and business sense.

As managing partner of Adler, Pollock & Sheehan, Brooks' labor and employment work includes counseling employers on day-to-day personnel administration and on complex administrative law issues like OSHA compliance and wage and hour issues under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Brooks also handles collective bargaining negotiations and the defense of union organizing campaigns. He has successfully represented employers in employment discrimination matters and represents employers in a wide variety of labor arbitration and administrative proceedings. In addition, he lectures frequently to groups and private companies on many of the issues facing human resource professionals on a daily basis.

Among Brooks' signature accomplishments is his role as chief negotiator and spokesman for the state of Rhode Island in collective bargaining with a coalition of 15 bargaining units representing more than 12,000 unionized state employees.

In 2017, Brooks' successful negotiations



with various bargaining units resulted in collective bargaining agreements that included a new health insurance plan which will save the state approximately \$14 million. He also extracted concessions on seniority rights in promotions, securing for the first time ever language allowing for performance development plans.

Meanwhile, Brooks provides day-to-day guidance to the town of North Kingstown on labor, employment and police disciplinary matters while representing it in grievance arbitrations, and for the last several years he has represented the state in contract negotiations with the Rhode Island State Troopers Association. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Chair, labor & employment group; member, executive and diversity committees; immediate past president, Board of Governors, Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence; recipient, Dorothy Lohmann Community Service Award, Rhode Island Bar Association



Congratulations
Robert P. Brooks
Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly
Go To Lawyer for Labor & Employment



One Citizens Plaza, 8th Floor
Providence, RI 02903
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INSURANCE DEFENSE

PAUL S. CALLAGHAN

Partner, Higgins, Cavanagh & Cooney
Providence

Higgins, Cavanagh & Cooney lawyer Paul S. Callaghan has more than 20 years' experience representing insurance companies, their policyholders, and local, national and international corporations in a wide variety of litigation matters in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

A partner in the litigation department at Higgins Cavanagh, Callaghan has tried more than 30 cases to conclusion and has numerous reported decisions from the Rhode Island Supreme Court, the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island and the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In the insurance coverage area of his practice, Callaghan handles disputes involving extracontractual liability, claims handling, insurance fraud, breach of contract, coverage and bad faith.

Among his coverage victories, Callaghan recently obtained summary judgment in trial court on behalf of a leading property and casualty insurer against assertions that a two-year limitations provision in a policy did not apply to the contract's appraisal clause.

The state Supreme Court subsequently upheld the decision, finding that arbitration of damages payable under the policy was time-barred by the plain language of the contract.



Callaghan also litigates construction cases involving defects, bodily injury, property damage, contracts, arbitration, indemnification insurance and sureties. He obtained a defense verdict in favor of a major New England construction company in a case in which the plaintiff demanded \$3 million in damages for personal injuries allegedly sustained in a slip-and-fall at a large construction site.

Meanwhile, Callaghan handles products liability cases on behalf of corporate clients in the industrial machinery, automobile and food products industries. And as an avid boater, he has a particular interest in admiralty and maritime matters including maritime torts, bodily injury, property damage and salvage cases. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Member, Rhode Island Bar Association, Massachusetts Bar Association, American Bar Association, Defense Counsel of Rhode Island and Defense Research Institute

ENVIRONMENTAL

SEAN O. COFFEY

Partner, Burns & Levinson
Providence

An environmental lawyer for 45 years, Burns & Levinson partner Sean O. Coffey is considered a pioneer in the field.

As a newly minted lawyer in the 1970s, Coffey served as staff counsel to the state Department of Natural Resources, where he helped create the Department of Environmental Management. He later served as chief legal counsel to the DEM, helping to draft many of the state's laws on hazardous waste management, solid waste disposal, wetlands protection, pollution control and groundwater protection.

Today, in private practice, Coffey works with private developers, financial institutions, municipal and state governments, and quasi-public agencies on major energy projects — including hydro-power and off-shore wind energy facilities, transportation and intermodal facilities — and major commercial projects, for which he provides environmental, land use and transactional representation for remediation and adaptive reuse of brownfield sites throughout the state.

Among Coffey's accomplishments is his representation of an investor and develop-



ers in remediating a former fuel storage facility and obtaining permitting for adaptive reuse of the site for the Village on Mount Hope Bay housing complex.

He also represented Rhode Island's higher education authority, the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College in negotiating a long-term development lease to transform a mothballed early 20th century coal-and-oil-fired power-generating plant into a high-tech nursing education center servicing both URI and RIC nursing students.

Coffey is also deeply involved in civic affairs and spent six years serving in the state Senate. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Head of Providence office; member, Executive Committee; past chair, United Way of Southeastern New England; past chair, Committee on Environmental Law, Rhode Island Bar Association; past board member, Save the Bay; recipient, "Civil Libertarian of the Year," ACLU of Rhode Island; former member, Rhode Island Senate; former president, Providence Preservation Society

TRUSTS & ESTATES

R.J. CONNELLY III

Attorney, Connelly Law Offices
Pawtucket

R.J. Connelly III's trust and estates practice is particularly focused on the critical and complex area of elder law.

Connelly's practice includes Medicaid planning and asset protection advice for individuals entering nursing homes; planning for the possibility of disability through the use of powers of attorney for health care and finances; guardianship; estate planning, probate and estate administration; preparation of wills; living trusts; and special or supplemental needs trusts.

He handles both contested and uncontested probate court matters and provides a wide range of fiduciary services to his clients in acting as trustee, attorney-in-fact, and representative payee or other court appointments.

Beyond the help he has provided for his clients over the years, perhaps Connelly's signature accomplishment is being certified as a Certified Elder Law Attorney (CELA) by the National Elder Law Foundation (NELF) in 2008. Connelly is only the third attorney in Rhode Island to be certified as CELA, is one of just a few hundred nationally and is the only practicing CELA in Providence County.

His certification as a specialist means he has been recognized by independent professional certifying organizations as having



an enhanced level of skill as well as substantial involvement in established legal specialty areas.

Connelly is committed to helping the elder community in other ways. For example, before the pandemic he sponsored the Virtual Dementia Tour — a simulation created to show people the physical and mental challenges of those living with dementia — free of charge in dozens of senior care facilities.

In addition, Connelly provides free training to long-term care facilities and senior centers on topics like senior bullying, substance abuse among seniors and senior suicide prevention. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Member, National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys; Certified Elder Law Attorney (CELA), National Elder Law Foundation; board member, John Clarke Retirement Community; chairman, Stonington Council on Aging; Commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, U.S. Army Reserved (ret); licensed real estate broker, Massachusetts and Rhode Island

BUSINESS

JEAN A. HARRINGTON

Partner, Duffy & Sweeney
Providence

As a longtime partner with Duffy & Sweeney and, recently, as chair of its business law team, Jean A. Harrington provides expertise in all facets of business law to her clients, which include sophisticated private investment funds, multinational corporations and other market participants, in their most challenging transactional matters.

Harrington is particularly known for engineering creative resolutions that unite divergent parties while bringing complex deals to fruition.

Among her most notable deals was the \$80 million sale of a longtime Rhode Island manufacturing business to a public company in a transaction that involved several shareholders, a corporate reorganization, shareholder meetings and communications, and real estate and environmental matters.

Harrington also handled the private financing, construction and development of Rumford Center in Rumford, a transaction that involved historic tax credits and multiple entities.

Additionally, she represented a software development and services provider for commercial and industrial entities in the sale of substantially all its assets in a transaction that entailed sophisticated tax planning and carryover investment by management in the new entity.



Meanwhile, Harrington represented a Netherlands-based wind turbine manufacturer in the establishment of U.S. operations and the development of wind turbine installations throughout the country, while also handling the acquisition of a Newport-based yachting and entertainment venue by a real estate development and management company. The latter transaction involved both private placement of equity and traditional bank financing.

Harrington is a sought-after speaker on business law topics and has been a longtime presenter at the Rhode Island Bar Association's annual meeting. She also serves on the board of the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Chair, business law practice group; member, board of directors, Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce; former member, board of directors, Employers Association of the NorthEast; presenter, "Organizing a Rhode Island Business," Rhode Island Bar Association

ENVIRONMENTAL

ROBIN L. MAIN

Partner, Hinckley, Allen & Snyder
Providence

Hinckley, Allen & Snyder partner Robin L. Main has more than 30 years' experience representing clients in proceedings before administrative agencies as well as in the state and federal courts.

Over the course of her career, Main — who co-chairs her firm's environmental and energy practice — has handled some of the more complex and significant environmental and energy matters in the region.

For example, she represented the first offshore wind farm in the United States in a complicated permitting process before the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council under the council's newly adopted Ocean Special Area Management Plan. She also successfully represented the wind farm before the Superior Court and Rhode Island Supreme Court in cases challenging the permitting process.

Main also represents utilities before federal and state environmental agencies both in Rhode Island and Massachusetts on the permitting and cleanup of legacy sites, including former manufactured gas plant and holder sites.

Additionally, she handled the successful defense of a large construction company in a wetlands enforcement action involving the rehabilitation of a river bed in western



Massachusetts. The parties included the Army Corps of Engineers, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and numerous stakeholders.

Meanwhile, Main routinely advises businesses in defending against and negotiating penalties in federal and state environmental enforcement actions involving release of oil and hazardous materials, air discharges — including asbestos — and water discharges.

At the same time, she regularly counsels real property and financial institutions on the handling and mitigation of environmental risks associated with transactions, including those involving brownfields agreements and environmental insurance. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Co-chair, environmental and energy practice; honoree, "2010 Top Women of Law," Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly; certified mediator, Mediation Works; board member, Jamestown Education Foundation; former director, New England Environmental Business Council; former chair, board of directors, Providence Animal Rescue League; member, Rhode Island State Properties Committee; former commissioner, Rhode Island State Ethics Commission

BUSINESS

AMY T.M. OAKLEY

Partner, Partridge, Snow & Hahn
Providence

Partridge, Snow & Hahn partner Amy T.M. Oakley has extensive experience and well-established relationships in both the finance community and the legal community, including investors, developers and lenders, in Rhode Island and beyond.

Over the course of her career, Oakley has represented more than 15 financial institutions in all areas of commercial finance, with a special emphasis on non-recourse and limited recourse debt; real estate and construction financing; asset-based financing; bridge and mezzanine financing; and multi-lender financing.

In this capacity Oakley has handled financing for major housing developments, shopping centers, hotels, condominiums and other large scale development projects in New England and throughout the country.

Additionally, Oakley represents investors, developers and lenders in federal and state tax credit transactions. She is well-versed in numerous tax credit initiatives and has been involved with historic, low-income housing, brownfields, film and energy efficiency credits, as well as other state-specific incentive programs.

In terms of specific engagements, Oakley represented Bank of America in providing a \$75 million loan, structured as a credit fa-



cility, to a Rhode Island-based construction company.

She also represented Santander Bank in its capacity as agent and lead lender in syndicated master credit facilities totaling \$135 million to support multistate medical and retail fund portfolios.

Meanwhile, Oakley represented Union Mill, a joint venture between real estate and construction companies, in connection with its transformation of 16 historic mill buildings in Warwick into residential and retail space.

Oakley is active in community affairs, serving on the boards of Preserve Rhode Island and Skills for Rhode Island's Future.

RILW

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

MATTHEW H. PARKER

Partner, Whelan, Corrente & Flanders
Providence

Matthew H. Parker of Whelan, Corrente & Flanders works with employers and human resources professionals seeking counsel on hiring, firing, pay, management and negotiation with employees.

Parker's practice entails drafting employment contracts, employee handbooks, non-compete agreements and non-disclosure agreements; conducting workplace investigations and trainings; representing companies and individuals in federal and state courts; and practicing before administrative agencies like the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights, the Rhode Island Department of Labor; the National Labor Relations Board and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Among other issues, Parker has litigated contract, insurance, and real estate disputes, benefits claims, discrimination claims and wage disputes, collection actions, and tort actions.

Parker also counsels clients on matters involving federal labor and employment laws such as Title VII, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act and the National Labor Relations Act. He provides additional counseling on state labor and employment laws and regulations.



Parker represents unionized employers in grievance arbitration hearings and in defense of unfair labor practice charges. Additionally, he contests union representation petitions and he has successfully handled unemployment and other agency appeals.

He has enforced and challenged various non-compete, non-solicitation, and non-disclosure agreements while prosecuting and defending whistleblower and retaliation cases and counseling clients toward favorable settlements in confidential mediations.

In addition to his busy practice, which also includes business litigation, Parker is a leader in local bar activities and currently chairs the Rhode Island Bar Association's Labor and Employment Committee. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Chair, Commercial Finance Group; honoree, Leadership Rhode Island, IOTA II (Class of 2013); board member, Preserve Rhode Island; board member and corporate secretary, Skills for Rhode Island's Future; former corporate secretary, director and committee chair, Child & Family RI

Achievements and professional activities

Chair, Labor Law and Employment Committee, Rhode Island Bar Association; member, board of governors, University Club of Providence; member, Local Rules Committee, U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island; member, Federal Bench Bar Committee; fellow, Rhode Island Bar Foundation; director and past president, Community Boating Center in Providence; Eagle Scout

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

ROGER A. PETERS II

Partner, Robinson & Cole
Providence

Robinson & Cole partner Roger A. Peters II brings his clients a wealth of experience in the areas of commercial real estate development, condominium formation, general real estate, hotel management and hospitality, leasing, and complex finance.

In terms of the transactional side of his practice, Peters represents buyers and sellers acquiring and divesting commercial properties all over the country, with his role including the drafting and negotiation of purchase and sale agreements and the closing of acquisitions and dispositions.

Peters' more sizeable transactions have included the divestiture of a large shopping center portfolio for a national developer and the sale of a waterfront mixed-use project in New England.

His transactional practice also includes office, industrial and retail leasing, and he has handled national leasing agreements for large retailers, a pharmacy chain, national equipment rental company, and regional developers. He further handles transactions related to cell tower sites and telecommunications licenses.

On the development side, Peters represents local and national developers and real estate investment trusts; funds and lenders in developing and financing commercial, residential and mixed-use office buildings; shopping centers; apartment complexes; and



residential and mixed-use condominiums.

Peters additionally represents national lenders and borrowers in connection with commercial mortgage-backed securities, franchise, affordable housing, and general commercial real estate loans and bond financing.

His development work has included the construction and financing of an oceanfront resort in New England, luxury seaside residences in Rhode Island, and a financial services company's commercial headquarters.

Peters is a member of the board of directors for the Southside Community Land Trust, which serves people in economically challenged urban neighborhoods where the scarcity of fresh produce puts them at increased risk of diet-related chronic disease.

RILW

Achievements and professional activities

Board of directors, Southside Community Land Trust; advisory board member, City Year; member, Rhode Island Bar Association, Massachusetts Bar Association, District of Columbia Bar Association and North Carolina Bar Association

PARTRIDGE SNOW & HAHN LLP

Congratulations to PS&H Partner
Amy Oakley

Her colleagues at Partridge Snow & Hahn already know Amy is a Go To Business Lawyer, and we are proud to see her recognized as such by Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly.

As chair of the firm's Commercial Finance practice group, Amy is well established as a go to lawyer among the large number of financial institutions that she has represented as well as the developers, lenders, and investors that she has counselled through all aspects of major development projects regionally and nationally. Her proven ability to lead effectively and efficiently continues to make her a Go To Business Lawyer for both new and existing clients.

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EDUCATION

STEVEN M. RICHARD

Partner, Nixon Peabody
Providence

Nixon Peabody partner Steven M. Richard, a leading practitioner in the higher education space, has three decades of experience representing colleges and universities across the nation on matters of critical strategic importance to their educational missions, programs and activities while working closely with general counsel and senior leadership.

The wide array of matters Richard handles includes issues of shared governance, disciplinary policies and procedures, civil rights claims, tenure disputes, privacy rights under FERPA and other statutes, and intellectual property ownership.

In terms of specific trial and appellate experience, Richard has litigated Title IX and student conduct matters extensively in federal and state courts across the country. After issuance of the U.S. Department of Education’s “Dear Colleague” letter specifying how schools should respond to reports of sexual harassment under Title IX, Richard defended colleges and universities in Title IX lawsuits filed by complainants and respondents, including in trials in federal court.

Richard also works regularly with boards, board committees and senior administration in the review and execution of bylaws,



policies and corporate governance, including recent assessments of the strategic and operational challenges posed by the pandemic.

Beyond his education law work, Richard maintains a busy complex commercial litigation practice in which he represents institutional clients such as financial services organizations and governmental bodies in trials, arbitrations, appeals and other dispute resolution procedures.

Meanwhile, Richard practices employment law as well, representing employers in matters involving claims under federal and state employment statutes such as Title VII, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act. **RILW**

BUSINESS

RICKIE M. SONPAL

Partner, Robinson & Cole
Providence

Through years of experience representing clients on all sides of financial transactions while serving as outside general counsel to a variety of entities, Robinson & Cole partner Rickie M. Sonpal has a unique understanding of the operational and financial challenges businesses face today.

Sonpal’s corporate and transactional practice includes mergers and acquisitions, partnerships and joint ventures, debt and equity financing, and general corporate and commercial matters. He represents clients across numerous industries with a special focus on the food and beverage and renewable energy industries.

Among his many successful engagements, Sonpal represented “I and Love and You,” a maker of premium pet food and pet care products, in connection with a major investment by private equity firm L. Catterton that fueled the Colorado company’s growth and expansion nationwide.

Sonpal also helped a socially conscious apparel company that focuses on ethically produced garments in securing several rounds of financing by an affiliate of global PE firm Trilantic North America.

Additionally, Sonpal represented a New England craft brewery in connection with debt and equity financings; the operator of the Port of Providence in obtaining “local match”



financing; a growth equity fund in its investment in a wine producer; and a tech-driven health care services company in its sale to a global information solutions provider.

Sonpal also serves as outside general counsel to a number of businesses, advising them on strategic and commercial matters. In that role, he assists corporations with corporate governance matters, supply chain and other commercial contracts, employment and equity incentive agreements, and general corporate matters.

Meanwhile, Sonpal regularly advises clients in the food and beverage industry on supply, co-manufacturing, distribution, logistics and other operational agreements. **RILW**

Achievements and professional activities

Leader, higher education and Title IX teams; member, American Bar Association; past chair, Local Rules Committee of U.S. District Court; member, Federal Court Bench/Bar Committee and Superior Court Bench/Bar Committee, Rhode Island Bar Association; member, Bryant University board of trustees; president-elect, Federal Bar Association, Rhode Island chapter

Achievements and professional activities

Co-chair, business transactions group; member, Business Organizations Committee, Rhode Island Bar Association; advisor, SEG Food & Beverage; member, Resilience and Energy Committee, town of Barrington

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