

DAILY REPORT

A SMART READ FOR SMART READERS



INSIDENEWS

Rookie judges are chosen to take MDL dockets, p. 8
An Earth Day admonition to reduce paper use by digitizing, p. 8

HD2001 30346101
BY BRYAN
FRIEND HEDRAK HARRIS
3 RAVENHURST ST. #1700
ATLANTA GA 30344
40758234

An ALM Publication

Newsreel

Miles Mediation Maintains Lead As Food Frenzy Nears Halfway Point of Two-Week Campaign

Miles Mediation & Arbitration led the legal organizations raising funds for the Atlanta Community Food Bank as the first week of the Legal Food Frenzy closed Friday afternoon.

Miles Mediation had raised \$6,350 as of 3:15 p.m., \$455 ahead of Georgia Tech's Office of Legal Affairs (\$5,895) and \$655 ahead of King & Spalding (\$5,700).

The Food Frenzy website reported that organizations supporting the Atlanta Food Bank had raised \$74,958, or 37 percent, of \$200,000 sought by the Frenzy's end on April 28.

It's not uncommon for the Food Frenzy, now in its 6th year, to collect more than half its goal in the second week of the campaign.

As a result, that means there is plenty of time for other teams to crash into the top tier, especially since awards are given in multiple categories.

The other top teams were:

- SSB Legal Department, \$4,620;
- Jenkins & Roberts, \$3,235;
- The Cochran Firm-Atlanta, \$3,175;
- Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, \$3,100;
- Georgia Attorney General's Office, \$2,900;
- UPS, \$2,330;
- Fisher Phillips, \$2,288;
- Jones Day, \$2,274;
- Team LLH, \$1,975;
- DeKalb County Law Office of the Public Defender, \$1,975;
- Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith, \$1,910;
- Troutman Sanders 2017, \$1,905;
- Hunton & Williams, \$1,752;
- Alston & Bird-The Hungry Birds, \$1,659;
- Strickland Brockington Lewis, \$1,500;
- Team Chick-fil-A, \$1,410;
- Bryan Cave, \$1,300.

—Jonathan Ringel

ON THE MOVE



Lee Gutschenritter switched to the plaintiffs side when he joined Finch McCranie last fall, taking on medical malpractice, trucking and premises liability cases. Now he's been made a partner.

Finch McCranie Prepares for Third Generation

MEREDITH HOBBS | mhobbs@alm.com

ADMIRATION FOR lawyers at one of Atlanta's oldest personal injury firms, Finch McCranie, helped persuade Lee Gutschenritter to switch from the defense to the plaintiffs side last fall. Now the firm has made him a partner.

Gutschenritter, 34, said he knew he wanted to be a litigator when he

started law school, but he wasn't sure what type. He went to work for a big Atlanta defense firm. Carlock Copeland & Stair, after earning a law degree from Florida State University in 2008.

When he decided to switch to plaintiffs-side work, Gutschenritter called Finch McCranie partners Richard

See **ON THE MOVE**, page 3

Jury Awards \$3M to Widow of Ex-Reed Smith Partner

ROY STROM | rstrom@alm.com

A CHICAGO federal jury awarded \$3 million on Thursday to the widow of a former leader of Reed Smith's corporate department, finding pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline plc liable for the 2010 suicide of Stewart Dolin.

The verdict was well below the \$39 million that Dolin's widow requested.

But it was her victory nonetheless, and the culmination of a nearly six-week trial between two sides who seemed to agree on nothing—most importantly, whether the popular antidepressant paroxetine that Dolin took for six days before he threw himself in front of a Chicago passenger train causes suicide in adults.

See **AWARDS**, page 4

Civil Rights Groups Sue to Reopen Voter Registration for 6th District Runoff

R. ROBIN MCDONALD | rmcdonald@alm.com

THREE WEEKS AGO, as early voting began in the nationally-watched congressional special election in Georgia's 6th District, lawyers representing the state chapter of the NAACP notified the secretary of state that Georgia's voter registration law could bar people from legally participating in a runoff election, in violation of federal law.

At issue is a state law that bars citizens who register to vote from participating in an election within 30 days of registration. The state, according to the letter sent to Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp March 30, treats runoff and special runoff elections as a continuation of the initial election, barring citizens from voting in a runoff who failed to clear the 30-day bar for the initial election but had been registered more than 30 days by the time a runoff took place.

That Georgia provision placed the state squarely afoul of federal law, contended the letter, penned by Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington.

Kemp's office disagreed. Georgia's law does not violate the National Voter Registration Act because "setting voter qualifications is completely within the purview of states and the U.S. Constitution and cannot be altered" by the federal law, said Kemp spokeswoman Candice Broce.

The Lawyers Committee—which has sued Kemp over voter suppression allegations before—often files these politically-motivated lawsuits right

See **SUE**, page 2



Plaintiffs attorney Bryan Sells: "There are people who submitted voter registration applications who are in limbo."



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ON THE MOVE, from page 1

Hendrix and Steven Wisebram, who'd been on the other side of what he said was a hard-fought medical malpractice case that he and Carlock Copeland founder Wade Copeland litigated for almost a year. "I took close to 25 depositions," said Gutschenritter, an associate at the time.

"I admired those guys' professionalism and the way they represented their client," Gutschenritter said.

Hendrix and Wisebram's client, Glenda Daniels, suffered serious damage to her internal organs during a gallbladder removal in 2012 at Habersham Medical Center in North Georgia. Copeland and Gutschenritter represented the hospital, which settled confidentially. So did the surgeon, but a jury returned an almost \$11 million malpractice verdict against the nurse anesthetists.

After a few months of talks, Hendrix and Wisebram offered him a job. "We needed him. Our practice is growing," Hendrix said, adding that he and Wisebram are both 65, so they wanted a younger partner to help with their tort practice.

Gutschenritter is the fourth partner for the 10-lawyer firm, which also handles whistleblower and white collar defense cases.

"We wanted someone who's competent, well-respected by his peers, shows professionalism with witnesses and in courts, and Lee fit the bill," Hendrix said, adding that he and Wisebram were impressed that Copeland gave Gutschenritter so much responsibility in the Daniels case.

"We have a unique culture here that we're protective of," said Hendrix. He was trained by Baxter Finch and Charles

McCranie, who founded Finch McCranie in 1965, when he joined more than 30 years ago after working as a federal prosecutor.

Gutschenritter joined Finch McCranie in September with the understanding that he'd be a partner, but all agreed to wait a few months to make it official. "We thought we knew what we were getting, but



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It was a chance for Gutschenritter to try out the firm as well. "It's important that he's in an environment where he can grow professionally and feel comfortable," Hendrix said. "We wanted to make sure he had adequate opportunity to make sure he wasn't buying a pig in a poke either."

Gutschenritter said developing clients and picking cases have been the biggest challenges as a new plaintiffs lawyer.

"It does take a while to develop your own clientele, but it so happens that we have a surplus of business right now, so we have a lot of cases to give Lee," Hendrix said, adding that Gutschenritter just confidentially settled a medical malpractice wrongful death case last week.

Gutschenritter said about half the cases he's handling are medical malpractice claims, plus some trucking, motor vehicle and premises liability accidents.

Case selection is crucial for med-mal cases, which require a lot of time and resources, Gutschenritter said, adding that Finch McCranie might take only one case out of 50 that it considers.

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BRIEFLY

Miller & Martin has recruited partners **Bobby Baker** and **Neil Wilcove** from **Freeman Mathis & Gary**. Baker was a Republican member of the Georgia Public Service Commission for 18 years until joining Freeman Mathis in 2011. He advises companies and local governments on regulatory issues. Wilcove is a commercial litigator, focused on construction and real estate disputes.

Toxic tort litigator **Elizabeth O'Neill** has joined **Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice** as a partner from **Hawkins Parnell Thackston & Young**, where she spent 17 years. O'Neill also handles professional liability litigation. She will practice out of the firm's Atlanta and Charlotte offices.

Environmental and regulatory partner **Elizabeth Davis** has joined **Burr & Forman** from **Barnes & Thornburg**. Davis handles environmental issues from permitting and remediation to litigation. She also advises on consumer product safety and food, drug and medical device regulations.

Intellectual property boutique **Kent & Risley** has added **Courtney Alexander** as a partner from **Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner**. Alexander is an IP litigator, handling technologies from wind turbines to artificial sports playing fields.

Michael Varon has joined **Cantor Colburn** as an associate from **Mennier Carlin & Curfman**. The former software engineer has been a patent attorney since earning a J.D. in 2013 from Emory University Law School. Varon is a native Spanish speaker and conversant in American Sign Language.

Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough has hired **Natalie Majeed** as an associate in its health care practice from **Balch & Bingham**. Majeed works on transactions and regulatory issues for health care companies.

Jenni Brown has joined divorce and family law firm **Boyd Collar Nolen & Tuggle** as an associate from **Stearns-Montgomery & Proctor** in Marietta. ☪

Meredith Hobbs writes about the Atlanta legal community and the business of law. Contact her at mhobbs@alm.com. On Twitter: @MeredithHobbs

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Finch McCranie Prepares for Third Generation—and Other 'On the Move' News

Meredith Hobbs, Daily Report

April 21, 2017

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