



6/23/2015 | Press Releases

Fast Tracker: Adam Warhola

Adam Warhola spends his days untangling the web that is asbestos litigation.

The longest-running mass tort litigation in the U.S., plaintiffs have been filing class-action lawsuits involving the deadly mineral since the 1960s, and, by 2020, 730,000 people claiming asbestos exposure have brought claims against 8,400 business entities, according to the Rand Corp.

Warhola, an attorney for Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote, P.C., is the national coordinating counsel in asbestos cases for the multistate law firm and represents the businesses listed as defendants and their insurance companies.

Representing defendants is a two-step process, Warhola said. First, he tries to exclude clients from the process. Second, if the defendant is not excused, "our job then is to figure out what the plaintiff did and how the exposure took place, if that caused the plaintiff's injury and the extent of the injury." Due to high risks to both sides, these cases are almost always settled out of court.

Warhola, whose great-uncle is the late artist and Pittsburgh native Andy Warhol, said he gets satisfaction when all involved reach a settlement they agree is just.

"They are very emotional cases," he said. "A lot of them result in the death of plaintiffs. I think every attorney involved in this has sympathy for the plaintiffs. ... I feel good when the case is resolved in an amount that's fair and the defendant doesn't wrongly pay or overpay."

Warhola, who has spent his entire career at Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote, said he fell into asbestos law when he was new to the firm.

"There was another attorney who was doing a lot of that and he retired," he said. "I took over for him."

On his other days, Warhola handles real estate law. His firm has its own in-house closing company, Emissary Settlements, LLC, and Warhola, co-chair of the real estate group, has represented buyers, sellers and lenders and worked on closings as small as a two-bedroom home and as big as a large-scale commercial development.

Greta Kelly, associate marketing director at Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote, credits Warhola with rebuilding the real estate group, maintaining a staff of 20, after a handful of key attorneys left (a few of which Warhola coaxed back). This was essential after the boom of the natural gas business brought in a slew of land sales and drilling leases that landed in the hands of the real estate group.

His interest in real estate law dates back to his law school days.

"I knew a guy who gave us a private loan (to buy and sell some houses)," Warhola recalled. "He was a family friend of a law classmate."

Although this work isn't as complex as asbestos law, it can be as emotional.

"I am happy to be part of the process to get someone into their home," he said.

Age: 34

Education: B.A., Duquesne University; J.D., University of Pittsburgh

Experience: Began his career at Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote

What is your dream job? I think it would be fun to be a weatherman. I think I have the personality for it, and it's no big deal if you're a little off!

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