

Ron Book's  
Toughest Battle

VIEW INTO FLORIDA'S NEWS, POLITICS & CULTURE

# INFLUENCE

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## Lobbying Avengers

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Greenberg Traurig and  
the Rise of the  
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# Lobbying Avengers

A group of approximately ten people, mostly men in suits and one woman in a red jacket, are shown in profile, looking towards the right. They are standing in front of a classical building with white columns and a pediment. A large, semi-transparent red triangle is superimposed over the scene, pointing downwards. The title 'Lobbying Avengers' is written in large, white, sans-serif font across the top of the image.

# LAW FIRMS STAKE THEIR CLAIM IN FLORIDA'S INFLUENCING BUSINESS

BY JIM ROSICA

It shouldn't be surprising that more law firms in the capital are beefing up their lobbying practices.

"As lawyers, we have a deeper understanding of the laws, as they exist and which changes to them will work," says **Hayden Dempsey**, a lawyer-lobbyist with Greenberg Traurig in Tallahassee.

He should know. Dempsey has worked for four governors, most recently as special counsel to Gov. **Rick Scott**.

The influence community also took note of a recent merger: Former House Speaker **Dean Cannon's** governmental affairs firm combined with Orlando-based law firm GrayRobinson, creating the third-largest influence shop in Florida.

That made GrayRobinson, as FloridaPolitics.com previously reported, "even more of a competitor to top lobbying heavyweights for well-heeled, A-list clients needing representation before the Legislature and state agencies."

And while the pure-play lobbying firms still rake in the biggest bucks, law-firm based shops are moving up. Take Greenberg Traurig's coming in fifth place in third-quarter 2016 earnings, at a median of \$1.03 million.

The Florida Bar, which regulates

the state's 104,000 attorneys, has taken notice. There's been a rise in lawyers starting "purely government relations firms and not the typical law firms," says **Nikki Fried**, a lawyer and medical marijuana lobbyist.

The Bar now has a "Governmental and Public Policy Advocacy Committee," and Fried is its vice chair. The section's membership list, with 66 members as of July, reads like a who's who of Tallahassee influencers.

"There wasn't a voice for lawyer-lobbyists," Fried says. "We're in a unique position. We're not traditional practitioners. We don't file motions; we don't go into court."

But as attorneys, "we're trained to think differently," she adds. "We're trained to know all the moving parts in statute and how they work together."

In this feature section, INFLUENCE is taking a long look at two lobbying law firms, Foley & Lardner and Greenberg Traurig, to show how their lobbying sets them apart.

The story package also includes mini-profiles of Florida's most successful lawyer/lobby shops and an introduction to Liz Dudek, who's trading in a long career in state government for advocacy in health-related topics. >>



*A happy collaboration between litigators and lobbyists for 25 years*

BY JIM ROSICA

When lawyer **Fred Baggett** combined his Tallahassee lobbying/law firm with Greenberg Traurig in 1991, the firm's founders made clear, they were "now one firm."

Even though that new enterprise at first was like serving, say, collards in fatback on top of key lime pie.

"We were good ol' boys in Tallahassee and they were the South Florida lawyers, and the legal and political community in Tallahassee scratched their heads: 'What the devil are you guys doing?' " recalls Baggett, now the managing shareholder in Tallahassee.

"We did litigation, contracts, and our lobbying, but most of our work related to government in one way or another," he says of his old firm, Roberts, Baggett, LaFace and Richard.

Greenberg, he says, "did not have the resources to deal with Tallahassee. They came up to see us and said 'this is not our town.' We merged the firms and we were their first office outside South Florida."

The combination worked, and Greenberg Traurig since then has exploded to 2,000 attorneys in 38 offices on three continents. And its capital lobbying practice, with Baggett still at the helm, is steaming on.

In recent years, Greenberg has made marquee hires, including veteran insurance lawyer-lobbyist **Fred Karlinsky** and **Liz Dudek**, former secretary of the state's Agency for Health Care Administration (see story, page 90).

The firm came in fifth this November in legislative lobbying compensation for the third quarter of 2016. State law requires lobbying firms to report revenue, but it only requires them to do so in general ranges, not in precise amounts. Greenberg posted \$1.03 million in lobbying revenue.

Having offices around the country only helps, especially for larger clients: "We may tell clients, 'if you have a Medicaid problem in Florida, chances



GREENBERG TRAUIG

PHOTO: Mark Wallheiser Photography



GOVERNMENT LAW + POLICY PRACTICE

**IT PAYS TO BE VETERAN TALENT, IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.**

When **Liz Dudek** retired in November as secretary of Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration, she was immediately able to join Greenberg Traurig’s lobbying practice as director of Healthcare Affairs.

State law normally bans lobbying by former state agency employees for two years after they leave. Dudek was able to bypass the lobbying ban because it exempts those hired before 1989; Dudek first starting working for the state in late 1974.

No wonder **Fred Baggett**, managing shareholder of Greenberg Traurig’s Tallahassee office, was “thrilled” to be able to add her to his team.

Dudek’s vast knowledge of the federal-state health care system made her a shoo-in.

She led an agency that has a \$26 billion budget, most of which went to funding Medicaid, the joint federal-state health care program for the poor. The agency also oversees licensing of Florida’s 45,000 health care facilities.

“As a leader in the regulation of health care for many years, her distinctive knowledge and expertise are unsurpassed,” Baggett said.

Gov. **Rick Scott** first appointed Dudek secretary of AHCA — which has a roughly \$20 billion yearly budget — in March 2011, according to the agency’s website. She was re-nominated by Scott for the job and again confirmed by the Senate in February.

“I’m a lifer, and I mean that in a really good sense,” she said during a confirmation hearing this January in the Senate Health Policy committee.

“... I believe in being responsible, in being accountable, honest and efficient,” she added. “And I think I lead the best team in state government.”

In a statement on her retirement, Scott said Dudek “has done an outstanding job making sure all Floridians have the opportunity to lead a healthy and safe life and I wish her the best.”

Over the years, she gathered legislative and regulatory experience few government officials have. Dudek served in a succession of positions in the agency, including:

- Bureau Chief of Certificate of Need/Budget Review
- Bureau Chief of Health Facility Compliance
- Assistant Deputy Secretary of Managed Care and Health Quality
- Deputy Secretary of the Division of Health Quality Assurance

“By joining Greenberg Traurig, I know I am joining a team that places integrity and professionalism above all else,” Dudek said in November.

“... In this new position, I will be able to nurture the relationships I have formed throughout my career and continue to help improve health care in Florida.”



**State Agency ‘Lifer’  
Liz Dudek Now  
Advocates for Health Care  
at Greenberg Traurig**

BY JIM ROSICA

PHOTO: Mary Beth Tyson

are you're going to have a similar problem in New York.' ... We can provide more than a normal lobby shop," Baggett says.

**Gus Corbella**, the firm's senior director of the Government Law and Policy practice in Tallahassee, often talks about having "a platform and a network," as do his colleagues. Corbella, who is not a lawyer, uses the example of getting "an email from someone in the firm that's having a client issue in Thailand."

"In five minutes, you'll see a half-dozen responses" from other members of the firm, he says. "It's a daily occurrence. Someone knows the ambassador, or someone else had the same problem. The degrees of separation are minimal."

Corbella, formerly chief of staff to Senate President **Jim King**, says he's still wowed "to have folks, many you may have never even met, reach out and say, 'Hey, I can help you.' I think that speaks a lot about this firm. That's how much the governmental practice is respected. They see that we get results."

Baggett adds: "The management of the firm is obsessed with collaboration. It's not like the old-school law firm model of a hierarchy of senior partners who have arrived and are entitled. Here, everybody works. And there are a lot of good lawyers that would not do well here because they expect the firm to support them. Those are the people the firm does not look for, either on the lawyer side or the lobby side."

Hiring Greenberg Traurig influencers provides a buffer and mediator between sometimes competing factions within the same company, especially sprawling corporations, he says.

"In the corporate world, the lobby side and the external affairs and general counsel side don't always see eye to eye," Baggett explains. "The lawyer says, 'Boss, we got a problem. Let's go litigate it and spend a couple million dollars for three or four years.' The external affairs side says, 'Let's get the right lobbyist and resolve it in six months.' The CEO looks at us as a combination in bringing us on. We can work better with the general counsel and the external affairs team."

His team also can tap into the talents of the firm's premier litigators in Tallahassee, including **Barry Richard**. He's known for representing then-Texas Gov. **George W. Bush** during the 2000 presidential election challenge, and more recently he helped the Seminole Tribe of Florida win a legal fight against the state to continue offering blackjack at its casinos.

"We use our litigators to help us with our lobby work," Baggett says. "We'll go to Barry and say, 'here's our issue; we need the legal perspective.' And he'll go in front of a (legislative) committee and explain it."

They also say they're not fussed by stricter new rules proposed by House



Liz Dudek, with Gus Corbella

Speaker **Richard Corcoran** and adopted by the Florida House. They include requiring lobbyists to file an individual disclosure for every bill, amendment, and individual appropriation they are trying to influence.

"While most people might consider it to be burdensome, it's a transparency process," Corbella says. "For lobbyists, transparency is not a dirty word. It's our reputation and our clients' reputation that we're sharing with elected officials. It's the bond that we share with those folks. If information is ever incorrect or misleading, you quickly lose your reputation in the process."

Picking up on that theme, Baggett refers to the random audits lobbying firms now are subject to. Last year was the first time under a 2005 state law that firms were randomly subject to audits. State law requires only that firms report compensation in ranges rather than exact figures, however, so it's not known precisely how much money is involved in lobbying lawmakers.

Baggett says he and others in the business sat down with staff to help devise an auditing program to delve into detailed recordkeeping, including revenues and time spent on executive lobbying versus legislative: "That was a big deal; they review every bill."

Greenberg also got a new CEO this year, **Brian L. Duffy**, who splits his time between the Denver and New York offices. The change in leadership hasn't meant a change

in firm culture.

"As a matter of fact, it's a reaffirmation of the culture: hardworking, collaborative, business oriented," Baggett says. "There's no class divide."

At the same time, Corbella says, "we're all on first-name terms with our CEO. I don't think you have a lot of law firms that have that kind of environment where you feel comfortable sending an email to your CEO."

Karlinsky left rival firm Colodny Fass to join Greenberg Traurig in 2014.

"A number of things were attractive to me," he says. "First, the team approach that we have, the support and backup."

"But really, it was the national and international platform for what I do, specifically on the insurance side, and the ability to have a number of different offices in a number of different states and a number of different countries with people that can handle all aspects of a client's needs, whether it be taxes or employment issues, mergers and acquisitions," he adds. "They make Greenberg an attractive business partner for anyone that's doing business in Florida."

Baggett says the 25th anniversary of the merger of his old firm with Greenberg Traurig will be this January.

"We found a firm that recognized the value of providing advocacy services inside a law firm," he says. "It's about the value to the client, being able to provide full service." ||