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In Increasingly Crowded Miami Market, Boies Schiller's Litigation Legacy Still Carries Weight

The firm has long focused on social justice issues, particularly out of its Florida offices, while also continuing to represent some of the most significant companies in the region, according to Ft. Lauderdale based firmwide co-Managing Partners Sigrid McCawley and Stuart Singer.

By Vivienne Serret

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What You Need to Know

- The elite litigation firm first opened doors in Florida in 2000.
- It has historically focused on social justice as well as representing some of the region's most important businesses.
- Leaders pride themselves on assembling small but powerful teams for matters

It was 2006 when the reality of thousands of children struggling to access health and dental care through Florida's Medicaid program first began consuming the thoughts of litigator Stuart Singer, now one of three managing partners at Boies Schiller Flexner.

Singer and his team made his case on behalf of the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and a class of 2 million children during 94 trial days in front of U.S. District Judge Adalberto Jordan over the course of over two years. In 2014 delivered a sweeping decision in Boies Schiller Flexner LLP's favor—finding that the children, who depend on the Florida Medicaid program for their medical and dental care, were not receiving the care required by federal law. The parties ultimately reached a settlement agreement in 2016.

The case has since been notable for the many, many lives it changed.

"It's a case that not many firms would have brought or supported for 10 years," Singer said. "We're all very



Courtesy photos

Sigrid McCawley, left, and Stuart Singer, right, of Boies Schiller Flexner.

proud of the result, and I would put that at the top of any list of cases I've been privileged to litigate."

After legendary litigators David Boies and Jonathan Schiller launched the litigation firm in 1997, with David's daughter Caryl Boies opening what is now the Fort Lauderdale office in 1998 and Steve Zack opening the Miami location in 2000. Even as a growing number of national firms with elite pedigrees have moved into the market, a trend which has accelerated over the past years, it's held onto marquee clients like Florida Power and Light and Carnival.

For Singer and Sigrid McCawley, who work together in the firm's Ft. Lauderdale office and serve as

firmwide managing partners alongside New York-based Matthew Schwarz, the firm's effectiveness in working in small, but powerful teams, is a testament to the firm's self description in being "the elite litigation firm."

The firm has always focused on social justice issues, particularly out of its Florida offices, according to McCawley, who highlighted the firm's role in litigation on behalf of the victims of Jeffrey Epstein, who made South Florida his preying grounds.

"We did the lion's share of that pro bono in the initial years. And that work was really so significant and life changing for many individuals," McCawley said. "We ended with a \$365 million dollar settlement – truly life changing money for those survivors. That pushed the law in a direction that it really hadn't been taken in before the Trafficking Victims Protection Act against those institutions."

The pair spoke with Law.com about maintaining the firm's profile and reputation in the hot Miami legal market.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What are the keys to retaining and gaining litigation clients in an increasingly competitive local market?

McCawley: My managing partner, Stuart Singer, has done work, for many decades, for what I would say are the most significant companies in South Florida. And that work is not just local. Those companies are national companies. They sit in South Florida. They rely on him for their most sophisticated and important and bad company litigation, so that has been a testament. They have stayed with us for all of these years, irrespective of how many other firms come in and out of this market, because he consistently wins for them. That is really the most important thing, and getting those good results and being a sounding board for their most difficult challenges that they face as companies here in South Florida really is a testament to his great work over all these many years.

Singer: It's because we've been able to build a very talented team of lawyers, and with a younger generation of lawyers, who are now both establishing themselves in the eyes of the legal community. For example, Sabria McElroy [was recently named] one of

the top 40 lawyers in the country under the age of 40. Attorneys like Evan Ezray, who, together with Pascual Oliu, have generated work for major companies and in jurisdictions like Texas, and, of course, Sigrid in her national practice. So it's been a team effort. You cannot be successful in this business without having the very best lawyers, because that's what we're selling, and that's what we've been fortunate to attract and retain here at Boies Schiller.

How was the firm able to keep headcount steady when litigation lagged as a result of pandemic court shutdowns?

McCawley: I was the busiest I've ever been during COVID. We had a South Florida client that filed litigation in a number of jurisdictions. What we saw certainly is that COVID tended to blow the lines between the working hours. Oftentimes it meant that people knew you were reachable and at home at all times. So as a busy litigation practice, while some of the hearings slowed down, we were generally very active during that time period as a firm, and that stayed consistent. So we were very fortunate to be able to weather that period quite well.

The firm came close to the top in a ranking of cases filed per litigator in the Southern District of Florida, since January 2020, according to your internal data. What are your thoughts on the metric?

McCawley: I think that really is telling, in the sense that it shows you that we are the go-to litigation shop in South Florida. We are not only present here and have been present here for decades, but we get the right results, and therefore we get the clients returning over and over again to have us handle their matters. So while many people may come in and out of this market, we've been here, performing, winning time and time again. And that really is a testament to, as Stuart said earlier, the quality and caliber of our just incredible stars in Fort Lauderdale, as well as Miami.

Singer: We often have fairly low ratio of associates to partners, so we work closely with small group of associates, as opposed to having very large teams, and I think that reflects itself with numbers which show a higher number of cases per attorney.