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At Nutter, Old Guard Meets New In Expanded Gov't Practice

By **Chris Villani**

Law360 (August 20, 2024, 4:34 PM EDT) -- Twenty-five years after they first met at Boston's Suffolk University Law School as professor and student, Bill Kennedy and Dan Mulhern are teaming up to lead an expanded government affairs and public policy practice at Nutter McClennen & Fish LLP.

Both staples in the Boston legal community, the pair are in some ways markedly different. Kennedy has been a fixture in the halls of the Massachusetts State House for decades, formerly serving as chief legal counsel to the speaker of the state House of Representatives and House Ways and Means Committee. A generation younger, Mulhern oversaw tens of thousands of cases as Suffolk County First Assistant District Attorney before joining Nutter and served as senior adviser and director of the city of Boston's Office of Public Safety under then-Mayor Marty Walsh.

But the expanded practice's new co-chairs say they also have plenty in common.

"Relationships matter to us, our integrity matters to us, and our ability to be innovative and smart with a very practical commonsense approach to problem-solving, I think we both share that skill set," Mulhern said in an interview.

"Dan and I share a commonsense approach to problem-solving and an unwavering commitment to obtaining favorable outcomes for our clients," added Kennedy. "However, our experience in practice and in government is different and expands our ability to serve our clients and colleagues."

Nutter, a midsize firm co-founded by former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, counts current U.S. District Judges Allison Burroughs and Nathaniel Gorton among its alumni.

The firm formally announced the lead tandem in late June.

Kennedy said Nutter had seen an uptick in demand from clients related to regulatory issues.

"Given Dan's and my background and deep expertise in government, the expansion of the practice was a natural next step," he said.

The government affairs and public policy group will work with clients in real estate, higher education, healthcare, finance, insurance and telecommunications, and with nonprofits, public and private companies and public-private partnerships, according to a firm announcement.

Mulhern said the plan is to have a dozen lawyers or more working in a wide range of areas. The always-shifting landscape of college athletics, including compliance issues, Title IX, and name, image and likeness figure to be a focus for the group, Mulhern added.

He said that Kennedy's ability to navigate often thorny and complex government regulations complement his own skills, which have focused more on "external stakeholders" since he joined Nutter two years ago, his first private sector gig.

Kennedy's experience extends to elected boards, agencies and other offices at the various levels of government, while Mulhern had to lead the state's largest district attorney's office through the worst of the pandemic with thousands of cases backing up amid closed courts.

"It required a lot of creativity, a lot of innovation," Mulhern said. "The court system had never dealt with challenges like those that were presented by COVID."

Mulhern, like so many in the legal field, has had to adapt to a world that is increasingly remote and impersonal, but he said Kennedy has taught him the importance of maintaining strong relationships over the years. Most notable is



Bill Kennedy



Dan Mulhern

Kennedy's tendency to prefer handwritten notes, something Mulhern described as being "quite legendary in the Boston community and beyond."

"That personal touch, that expert care that he has provided to the people who are important in his life has been a great and valuable lesson to me," Mulhern said, adding that he especially appreciated Kennedy sending him notes wishing him well when he went to work for Walsh and later when he landed his job at the district attorney's office.

Kennedy said he has enjoyed following his former student as he has risen through the ranks of the Boston legal scene.

"It has been a pleasure to see him succeed," Kennedy said.

And for Mulhern, the new position has provided him a chance to work with a man he calls a mentor.

"It's almost poetic," Mulhern said, "coming full circle to join him in this role."

--Editing by Rich Mills.

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