

Florida Powerhouse: Greenberg Traurig

By **David Minsky**

Law360 (September 19, 2024, 4:50 PM EDT) -- Greenberg Traurig LLP's path to prominence spans more than half a century of successfully navigating, complex legal and business matters, and the firm's recent triumphs — including facilitating billions of dollars worth of real estate transactions and prevailing in public interest litigation — have landed it again on Law360's list of Florida Powerhouses.

Greenberg Traurig was founded in Miami in 1967 by Mel Greenberg, Larry J. Hoffman and Robert H. Traurig. The firm has no official headquarters, and its largest presence is in New York City. But 407 of its attorneys — almost 20% — work out of the firm's six Florida offices in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, Tampa, Orlando and Tallahassee. That's an increase of five over last year, say firm leaders, who also note that past shareholders include former Florida Gov. Reubin Askew, who worked for Greenberg Traurig while seeking the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984.

The firm operates globally while "still having strong roots and knowledge of the local community," Jaret L. Davis, a senior vice president at Greenberg Traurig, told Law360 in an interview.

"We're a firm with a strong local and intimate reach in our communities, and that's what clients are looking for," Davis said.

A Miami native himself, Davis has logged 26 years with Greenberg Traurig. He recalled that in the 1990s, the firm was described as one of the fastest-growing in the nation — he said it is still on the move as Miami cements its place as a global hub for business and entrepreneurs.

Since launching 57 years ago, Greenberg Traurig reports, the firm has gone from employing only three lawyers to employing more than 2,750 worldwide and is a "unicorn," meaning it is valued at more than \$1 billion. In fiscal year 2023, Greenberg Traurig reported more than \$2.3 billion of revenue.

Miami is on its way to becoming "unbelievably strong," Davis said, adding that as Miami becomes stronger, so does the statewide market. "When you travel across the world, and you mention Miami, it lights people up, and they tend to become very inquisitive."

Litigation



David B. Weinstein, the managing shareholder of the Tampa office and a litigation attorney, said the collaborative nature of the firm's attorneys across all offices and their willingness to go to bat for one another are key to Greenberg Traurig's winning strategy.

"There's no ego here," Weinstein told Law360 in an interview. "We're not afraid to go to trial. We train for a fight that's going to go 15 rounds."

Greenberg Traurig represented The Palm Beach Post in the newspaper's battle to release long-awaited court transcripts from a 2006 grand jury in the Jeffrey Epstein sex abuse case. After Epstein's death in 2019, the newspaper sued Palm Beach County officials and, in July, won the release of all grand jury transcripts in the state's case against Epstein.

The lawsuit inspired House Bill 117, a law signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis in February that removes barriers to releasing grand jury transcripts if public disclosure would be "furthering justice" — laying the groundwork for similar cases in the future.

The firm also is representing Florida State University in the college's highly publicized lawsuit against the Atlantic Coast Conference over fees associated with leaving the conference.

"We don't just litigate," Weinstein said. "We try cases."

Real Estate and Land Use

Prior to joining Greenberg Traurig, Iris Escarra was a Miami assistant city attorney. Now co-chair of the firm's land use practice and based in Miami, Escarra counts herself among the firm's "dirt lawyers" who help developers and owners to get projects built.

Escarra described Greenberg Traurig as a full-service law firm capable of handling "anything and everything with real estate," and she noted that condo development, in particular, is the firm's bread and butter.

Greenberg Traurig has helped to secure more than \$2.25 billion for eight major condo projects across Florida over the past year, according to firm leaders. That includes \$430 million designated for the Witkoff Group's redevelopment of the historic Shore Club Private Collection in Miami Beach and \$328 million for Related Group's Baccarat Residences in Miami.

Escarra also touted Greenberg Traurig's extensive pro bono work in land development, including securing land use approvals and zoning as counsel for a new Bay of Pigs Museum and Library in Little Havana, as well as the firm's work to help Make-A-Wish Southern Florida get a new 30,000-square-foot headquarters and "wish house."

The firm has donated 950 pro bono hours to the Make-A-Wish project since 2019, firm leaders said. That includes handling all legal work, including negotiating and closing the deal, getting financing, negotiating construction documents and securing approval from Miami to rezone the land.

"We're a full-service law firm that can handle anything and everything related to real estate — from helping a client buy the land, build the project, and then sell it, plus everything in between," Escarra said.

"Clients like our one-stop shop concept," she added. "Because of the volume of work that we handle, we're a lot more efficient. Clients really appreciate the experience that we bring to a project. Our developer clients see us as an extension of their team; we know their business, and we care about their business because of the trust they put in us to guide their projects from beginning to end."

Corporate and Government

Greenberg Traurig is also very strong, Davis said, in corporate law, such as the legal side of strategic mergers and acquisitions, raising capital, and the use of special purpose acquisition companies.

For example, the firm represented longtime client OPKO Health in offering convertible senior notes totaling \$300 million, capitalizing on favorable debt market conditions, firm leaders said. In addition, Greenberg Traurig represented OPKO in connection with the sale of select assets of its subsidiary BioReference Health to Labcorp in a \$237.5 million deal, the closing of which Labcorp announced Sept. 16.

Escarra and Davis both expressed particular pride in Greenberg Traurig's pro bono work, with Davis calling it a "part of our fiber."

"It's a role that we cherish," Davis said.

--Editing by Amy French.