

Hodgson Russ Adds Bankruptcy Talent To Buffalo Team

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Hodgson Russ LLP has added an attorney who focuses on complex commercial insolvency matters to its team in Buffalo to work as a partner with its bankruptcy, restructuring and commercial litigation practice.

Travis Powers is joining Hodgson Russ from White and Williams LLP, where he worked as a counsel for a little over two years, according to his LinkedIn profile. The firm announced Powers had joined on Wednesday.



Travis Powers

Powers has represented unsecured creditors committees in Chapter 11 cases and international corporate and finance entities in large bankruptcy matters, the firm said. He also serves as a commercial litigator, working with creditors' rights issues under the Uniform Commercial Code and New York Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law, the firm said.

Mairi Stewart, the global head of attorney and law firm operations for Hodgson Russ, told Law360 Pulse in an interview Friday that Powers' new role with the firm is reflective of its growth strategy, "a very aggressive, organic" focus on attracting talent like Powers to the platform, she said.

"Specifically with respect to bankruptcy, that's an area that we had identified that we wanted to deepen our bench on, and so having Travis join effectively does that, and so we're really excited about the fact that he joined," Stewart said.

Stewart said that generally, as a growing firm, Hodgson Russ had a key objective to deepen its bench in areas where they thought they could offer a broader range of client services.

Powers told Law360 Pulse that he and his wife used to live in Buffalo for four years and that he previously worked for Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC, and through that experience met Hodgson Russ' bankruptcy restructuring and commercial litigation practice leader, Jim Thoman.

Insolvency is expected to see an increase in work almost annually, Powers said, and while that rarely actually happens, he believes there's still a big wave of restructurings on the horizon as a result of COVID-19, even though the pandemic has all but ended.

Powers said he is still expecting a wave of possible restructuring in the hospitality industry as the recent resurgence in vacations and traveling starts to slow down.

"I personally think we have to take a look at hospitality and see how that's going to shake out of the post-COVID world," Powers said.

Powers said there wasn't going to be a partnership opportunity for him at White and Williams in the short term, which in part drove his decision to move, but he also noted Hodgson Russ' prestige and commitment to growing the insolvency group as factors contributing to his decision.

"Hodgson Russ has a storied history. It's 217 years old, two presidents have come from Hodgson's, it's a very prestigious place to be," Powers said. "You can carry that prestige with you whether it be in court, at the negotiation table, you know anything you're doing in your career if you've got Hodgson Russ behind your name, you've got that prestige that comes with it, and they've earned it over a very long history."

Powers is a Marine Corps veteran, and in addition to serving as a Marine One presidential helicopter guard for President Bill Clinton, he was a military police officer in Okinawa, Japan. There, Powers was a liaison between local police and military personnel, the firm said.

Powers said he fell into the opportunity to serve as a Marine One security guard when a position opened up after several marines got out of the service or moved to different duty stations.

"All of the military is hurry-up-and-wait, and Marine One is no different. A lot of late nights, walking around a helicopter, just telling yourself stories in your head to keep yourself awake," Powers said. "But there's also those times where, wherever the president goes, Marine One goes, and wherever Marine One goes, they're going to need the security guards, so I got the opportunity to see a lot of the world."

After he got out of the Marines, Powers went to the University of Maryland and wanted to become a war correspondent, but eventually he decided to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and uncle, who are both attorneys, he said.

While he didn't know what area of law he wanted to practice, Powers graduated from the University of Tulsa College of Law during the 2009 economic recession, which drove his decision to pursue a master's of law degree in bankruptcy from St. John's University School of Law.

"I knew what I didn't want to do in law school. I wasn't necessarily interested in criminal law or family law. I was very interested in law that had a corporate tilt," Powers said.

Powers found Fafinski Mark & Johnson PA, a small firm in Minneapolis known primarily for aircraft finance and leasing matters, he said. He joined at a time when that group was named as counsel to the unsecured creditors committee in the Thomas Petters \$4 billion Ponzi scheme **matter**.

"I went to the firm knowing I wanted to be a bankruptcy attorney, obviously, but that particular case, if you want to learn a trial by fire, you want a case like that with a smaller group," Powers said. "I was doing things that a first, second and third year at a bigger firm probably would not have been able to do."

--Additional reporting by Ryan Boysen. Editing by Haylee Pearl.