

IN THE NEWS

Former Butzel Long Chairman and CEO, William M. Saxton, who was a 60-plus year career attorney with the firm, passes away

4.17.2019

DETROIT, Mich. – Former Butzel Long Chairman and CEO William M. Saxton, who had a 60-plus year career with the firm, passed away on April 15, 2019 in Arizona. Most recently, Saxton was Counsel and a Director Emeritus of Butzel Long.

“Bill was a chief architect of the modern-day Butzel Long, yet had deep respect for our long and storied history,” said Justin G. Klimko, President and CEO, Butzel Long. “He had countless career achievements and was a leader, visionary, mentor and gifted writer. He was lauded among his peers and well respected by members of the judiciary. Despite his impressive achievements, he especially enjoyed mentoring young attorneys, who appreciated the opportunity to learn from a truly great attorney.”

Saxton graduated from The University of Michigan (B.A., 1949; J.D., 1952). He joined Butzel Long in 1952 and was a litigator, negotiator and counselor. He enjoyed national preeminence as an expert in the labor and employment law field but was also an accomplished litigator outside of that field. Saxton successfully argued the 1974 case of *Milliken v Bradley* before the U.S. Supreme Court, which dealt with the controversial topic of cross-district school busing.

Saxton bridged multiple generations at Butzel Long. He started when the two named partners, Leo Butzel (who joined the firm in 1896) and Tom Long (who joined in 1909), were still practicing with the firm, and he continued to contribute into the 21st century. Saxton was an instrumental figure in the growth of Butzel Long in the 1970s and 1980s, in both size and prominence. Saxton served as Managing Partner while the firm was a partnership and as President, CEO and a member of the Board of Directors following the firm’s conversion to a professional corporation in 1982.

Saxton’s career achievements are significant. He was elected a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, a Fellow Emeritus of the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers, a Life Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, a Life Fellow of the Michigan Bar Foundation and a member of the American Law Institute.

In 1996, Saxton was awarded the Nathan B. Goodnow Award by the Detroit Bar Association in recognition of a career that exemplifies the highest standard of the legal profession and significantly impacted the law and life of the community.

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In 1998, he received the Distinguished Service Award from the State Bar of Michigan Labor and Employment Law Section in recognition of his “long established commitment to excellence, highest ethical principles and major contributions to the practice of labor and employment law.”

One of Saxton’s most significant honors was when he received the State Bar of Michigan’s Champion of Justice Award in 2003 for integrity and adherence to the highest principles and traditions of the legal profession and professional accomplishments.