

IN THE NEWS

Reflecting on three generations of Butzel leaders

Firm News

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Newly elected President and CEO Paul M. Mersino shares a unique camaraderie with colleagues, Justin G. Klimko and Richard E. Rassel

DETROIT, Mich. – While they represent three generations of Butzel law firm leaders, Paul M. Mersino, Justin G. Klimko and Richard E. Rassel have a lot in common beyond the distinction of serving as President and CEO. Their legal careers and accomplishments have largely been with Butzel. Each has upheld a Butzel tradition of giving back to the metro Detroit community. These attorneys are revered and lead by example.

Although Paul Mersino, 39, is new to the role of President and CEO of Butzel, he has been a powerhouse throughout his career. He was elected to the firm's Board of Directors in March, 2020. As a board member, he is responsible for the operations and management of the 150+ attorney firm, including budgeting, setting strategic goals, and more. As Litigation Practice Department Chair, he was responsible for the management and oversight of the firm's Commercial Litigation attorneys who reported to him as well their strategic goals, budgeting, forecasting, and direction of the practice group. Mersino also has served as Trustee of the Butzel Charitable Trust.

For 13 years, Justin Klimko served in the role of President and CEO. He steered Butzel through the 2008 recession. He also sought opportunities to expand and grow the firm over the years including the addition of Butzel's Grand Rapids office on January 1, 2023. Most recently, Klimko has helped shape the future of Butzel by positioning it as the law firm of the future. Under his direction, Butzel has been named to *Crain's Detroit Business'* Cool Places to Work in 2021 and 2022, respectively. He will continue with the firm focusing on his practice in securities regulation, corporate financing, mergers and acquisitions, corporate governance and general corporate matters.

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Justin G. Klimko
Shareholder

Paul M. Mersino
President & CEO

Richard E. Rassel
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Most recently, Richard Rassel served in the role of Chairman of Butzel. He has been a mentor to generations of Butzel attorneys. One of his many career accomplishments was having enough litigation success to be elected to the American College of Trial Lawyers at age 48. He will continue with the firm and will focus on his practice which includes complex business litigation. He is a counselor to clients in the automotive, healthcare, and aerospace industries.

About Paul M. Mersino

Paul Mersino is a recognized business leader in metro Detroit. He was named to *Crain's Detroit Business* magazine's 2021 Class of "40 Under 40" list. In 2020, he was named to *DBusiness* magazine's "30 in Their Thirties."

Mersino has been recognized as a Top Lawyer by *DBusiness* magazine, as a *Michigan Super Lawyer*, as one of Oakland County's Elite 40 under 40, and as an "Up and Coming Lawyer" by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*.

He represents public and private companies, in a number of areas including complex commercial litigation, contract disputes, non-compete and trade secret disputes, automotive supplier disputes, construction litigation, and First Amendment litigation. Mersino has seen a number of successes in trials and cases across the country, having obtained jury verdicts, summary judgment rulings, dismissal of cases against his clients, and settlements favorable to his clients in state and federal courts throughout the nation.

Mersino also represents and advises a number of startup companies, assisting them with their legal needs and matching them with potential venture capital funding. He handles appeals in the Michigan Court of Appeals, the Michigan Supreme Court, and in federal courts across the country.

Mersino has served on the Board of Directors of the Detroit Bar Association and as an advisor to the Michigan Institute of Continuing Legal Education's Litigation Advisory Board.

About Justin G. Klimko

Justin Klimko has received numerous awards and recognitions for business law matters and is ranked as one of Michigan's leading corporate and M&A lawyers. He is a past Chair of the State Bar of Michigan Business Law Section and a past recipient of the Section's Stephen H. Schulman Outstanding Business Lawyer Award.

He Co-Chairs the State Bar of Michigan Business Law Section's Corporate Laws Committee, responsible for development of Michigan's corporate statute. He also has chaired the Section's Ad Hoc Committee on Legal Opinions, which has issued reports to address opinion issues in business transactions, including issues specific to Michigan law, and is a member of the TriBar Opinion Committee, a prominent national committee addressing opinions in business transaction.

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Klimko was named to *Michigan Lawyers Weekly's* Hall of Fame Class of 2022. In 2021, he received the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG) Detroit Lifetime Achievement Award. He is a Board Member and Secretary of ACG Detroit.

He previously taught corporation law as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Detroit Mercy Law School, frequently lectures and authors articles on business law subjects and has served as general editor of a treatise on Michigan Business Forms and as a contributing author for a treatise on Michigan contract law.

Klimko is included in the publication *The Best Lawyers in America* and enjoys an "AV" rating from the Martindale-Hubbell rating system. Klimko is rated one of Michigan's top Corporate/M&A attorneys by *Chambers USA Guide of America's Leading Lawyers for Business* and is listed in *Michigan Super Lawyers* (Mergers and Acquisitions).

About Richard E. Rassel

Richard Rassel is Secretary and a Director of the *Detroit Legal News*. Over the years, Rassel's professional skills have earned him listings in *Chambers*, *The Best Lawyers in America*, *Michigan Super Lawyers*, as well as a Martindale-Hubbell AV preeminent rating. In addition, he was a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers from 1989 to 2013. He served on the initial Board of Directors of Lex Mundi, a global association of 160 independent law firms.

In 2021, Rassel received the Detroit Regional Chamber's Inaugural Business Leadership in Education and Equity Award. He was recognized for his years of service and unwavering commitment to the mission of Detroit Drives Degrees, a collective impact initiative to improve the pipeline in the Detroit region with three areas of focus: advancing access to postsecondary opportunities; boosting student success; and, retaining local talent and attracting new talent. He currently serves as Co-Chair of Detroit Drives Degrees and as Vice Chairman of the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce's Foundation Board.

He is a past Board Chair of Detroit Public Television where he was honored with the 2011 Community Leadership Award, past Chairman of the Board of the Holy Cross Foundation, past Director of the Michigan Strategic Fund, former Chairman and Founding Trustee of the Rosa Parks Scholarship Foundation, former Chairman of the Metropolitan Affairs Coalition and a member of the Dean's Advisory Council of University of Michigan Law School.

Rassel has been honored with the Community Service Award and the Leadership Award by the Birmingham (Michigan) Community House, where he is a past President. He is a Trustee of William Beaumont Hospital System; an Ambassador of the College of Arts and Sciences of Oakland University; and a member of the Board of Advisors for the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. In 2020, he was named to *Michigan Lawyers Weekly's* Hall of Fame.