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South Florida Hospitality, Retail Sectors Feeling Coronavirus Impacts

by Lidia Dinkova

The South Florida hospitality and retail sectors are feeling the impact of the coronavirus pandemic as events are canceled and Europeans are barred from U.S.-bound flights.

The latest Miami-Dade County data show nine of 10 hotels reported cancellations for March and some for April and May. They also expect the loss of future business, according to the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The annual Ultra Music and Calle Ocho festivals in Miami have been canceled. During spring break, Miami Beach is expecting a much tamer season after the city postponed nearly all major events, including the annual Pride Festival.

Princess Cruises, owned by Miami-based Carnival Corp., canceled voyages Thursday for two months, and Fort Lauderdale is one of its key ports. Fort Lauderdale also scotched its annual St. Patrick's parade, and the Palm Beach International Boat Show is off the calendar.

The tourism industry had little time to absorb President Donald Trump's announcement late Wednesday of a

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Florida's Large Law Firms Expect Billing Rate Increases in 2020 While Smaller Firms Stay Put

by Dylan Jackson



MELANIE BELL

Furr & Cohen co-founder Robert Furr says he held his rate steady for the last few years.

Florida's bankruptcy law firms reported little to no increases in rates last year, while the state's larger Am Law 200 firms all say they expect their own rates to rise.

The Daily Business Review gathered reported rates in bankruptcy filings to get a sense of whether billing rates are seeing increases or decreases in Florida. When compared to averages gathered on firm rates in 2018, the median rate for bankruptcy partners saw a small 1.2% increase among the firms who made both lists—a sign that among Florida's regional firms, rates stayed relatively flat.

The median rate among partners in the total sample of 71 Florida bankruptcy firms was \$400. The median rate for associates was \$319. The data does not account for the creditor representation

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Investors Sue Norwegian Cruise Line Over Stock Fallout From Alleged Downplaying of Coronavirus



SHUTTERSTOCK

The class action lawsuit claims shareholders took financial hits due to Norwegian's alleged false statements to would-be customers that coronavirus wouldn't affect their trips.

by P.J. D'Annunzio

Amid the coronavirus-induced shock waves that have rocked the cruise industry, a group of investors has sued Norwegian Cruise Line after news ar-

ticles exposed the company's alleged practice of lying about the severity of the disease in order to keep bookings, which caused the cruise line's stock to tumble.

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'Heartrending' Case Shows Limits of Personal Injury Law

by Raychel Lean

A lawsuit against a Pembroke Pines funeral home that lost the remains of a miscarried baby floundered at the Fourth District Court of Appeal, which found that although the case was "troubling and heartrending," it didn't have what it takes to proceed.

The case demonstrates the limits of Florida personal injury law, which under most circumstances doesn't provide an avenue for damages without a physical injury.

Deon Williams and Evan Chang sued Boyd-Panciera Family Funeral Care Inc. in Pembroke Pines for negligence and egregious misconduct in 2016. They sought damages for emotional distress, after employees deviated from protocol and lost track of stillborn baby Grace's cremated body.

But the plaintiffs suffered no physical impact that would support their complaint.

The Fourth DCA acknowledged the plaintiffs' ordeal, but found the

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Empathy Galvanized Manuel Dobrinsky's Legal Career

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Manuel Dobrinsky

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BILLING RATES

taken on by larger firms such as Akerman, DLA Piper or White & Case as those rates are not public. Representing creditors is often more lucrative and many attorneys in the space charge upward of \$1,000 per hour.

Furr & Cohen, which reported the eighth-highest average billing rate, saw its average billing rate drop by 7%. Co-founding partner Robert Furr said the slight decrease is incidental. Rates can vary year by year depending on whether or not he offered a blended fee and the staffing models he employs. Furr & Cohen reported an average partner billing rate of \$500. In 2018, the firm's average partner rate was \$538.

"The drop is just incidental," Furr said. "I haven't increased my partner rate in the last few years."

While Furr and other bankruptcy firms don't seem to have raised rates, all of Florida's large firms expect increases. Holland & Knight, Shutts & Bowen, Akerman, Greenberg Traurig, Greenspoon Marder and GrayRobinson all raised their rates by more than 3% last year and are expecting firmwide increases of more than 3% in 2020, according to ALM data.

Gretta Rusanow, head of Advisory Services at Citi Bank's Law Firm Group, said firms in the Southeast, which include several Florida firms, reported an average billing rate increase of 5.2% in 2019. That increase ranked fourth in the country, ahead of six other regions, including Washington, D.C., the Northeast and Northern California.

But Florida's rates have not yet grown to the levels charged by attorneys in other large markets such



Joseph Ankus

as New York, D.C. or Los Angeles. According to Canadian practice management company Clio, the average billing rate for Miami lawyers in 2017 was \$297, the seventh highest among the 10 large metropolitan markets the company studied. Attorneys in New York City and Los Angeles on average charged the most, at \$368 per hour and \$346, respectively.

Veteran Florida legal recruiter Joe Ankus said rates in Florida will likely never reach the heights of other metro areas because of the nature of the state's economy: more local, smaller companies and fewer of the large Fortune 500 corporate clients that can stomach rates regularly approaching \$1,000.

Around 40 Fortune 500 companies are headquartered in Florida, including NextEra Energy, Publix Super Markets and Office Depot. By comparison, New York is home to 95 Fortune 500 companies and California boasts 118.

"Miami has never considered itself in the same rate structure" as some of the more expensive markets, Ankus said. "It has nothing to do with the quality of the



Adam Foslid

work, rather, many firms represent local businesses instead of national companies."

Rates can also differ within a single market. Large multinational firms such as DLA Piper and White & Case often charge rates exceeding those of locally founded Am Law 100 firms such as Greenberg Traurig, Akerman and Holland & Knight. Smaller firms such as Furr & Cohen, which aren't looking to grow at the same rate of the Am Law 200, can afford to keep their rates flat year after year.

The climbing rates of large firms leave an opportunity for smaller firms to pick up highly skilled attorneys. Many Big Law attorneys find themselves hamstrung by high rates that can shrink their client base, and smaller firms can capitalize on that.

Adam Foslid, a former litigation leader at Greenberg Traurig, said his rates have changed moderately since he joined boutique litigation firm Stumphauzer Foslid Sloman Ross & Kolaya last year. He said clients have appreciated the lower rates and fewer conflicts of boutique practice.



Luis Suarez

"I do think many clients have a preference, particularly in litigation, for smaller boutiques like mine," he said. "It's also opened doors to new opportunities and new clients I previously wouldn't be able to be exposed to."

Boutiques can also be more flexible on the financial arrangements with clients, said Luis Suarez, who recently left Boies Schiller Flexner to start the boutique firm Heise Suarez Melville alongside two other Boies Schiller partners. Many larger firms reported that less than 10% of their revenue was derived from alternative fee arrangements.

"Smaller firms can be more flexible on pricing and we can push the fixed fee arrangement," Suarez said. "And if they insist up an hourly we can be more competitive in the market than a big national firm."

Dylan Jackson writes about how national law firms manage their talent, diversity. He also writes about Latin America. He can be reached at djackson@alm.com or 305-347-6677. On Twitter @DylanBJackson

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2019 Florida Attorney Billing Rates

METHODOLOGY
ALM Legal Intelligence collected 2019 hourly billing rates for partners and associates from bankruptcy court records of the Southern, Middle and Northern districts of Florida.



* Represents one biller. Firms are ranked by average partner rates.

Rank	Law Firm	Office	Partner Billing Rate Avg	Associate Billing Rate Avg
1	Genovese Joblove & Battista	Miami	\$695*	
2	Berger Singerman	Miami	\$660	
3	Meland Russin & Budwick	Miami	\$595	\$350*
4	Latham, Luna, Eden & Beaudine	Orlando	\$575*	
5	Shraiberg, Landau & Page	Boca Raton	\$550*	
-	Rappaport Osborne & Rappaport	Boca Raton	\$550	
7	Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough	Orlando	\$538	
8	Seese	Fort Lauderdale	\$515*	
-	Navarro McKown	Miami	\$500*	
-	Furr & Cohen	Boca Raton	\$500	\$350*
11	Leiderman Shelomith Alexander + Somodevilla	Fort Lauderdale	\$475*	\$250*
12	Thames Markey & Heekin	Jacksonville	\$465*	
13	David W. Steen	Tampa	\$450*	\$300*
-	Law Office of Adam I. Skolnik	Deerfield Beach	\$450*	
-	The Associates	West Palm Beach	\$450*	
16	Joel M. Aresty	Tierra Verde	\$440*	
17	Law Offices of Buddy D. Ford	Tampa	\$425*	\$338
-	Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman	Coral Gables	\$425*	
19	Behar Gutt & Glazer	Fort Lauderdale	\$410	\$350*
-	Johnson Pope Bokor Ruppel & Burns	Tampa	\$410	\$225*
-	Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick	Tampa	\$410	\$295
22	Allen Turnage	Tallahassee	\$400*	
-	Brundage Law	Safety Harbor	\$400*	
-	Hoffman, Larin and Agnetti	Miami	\$400*	
-	Marshall Grant	Boca Raton	\$400*	
-	Tampa Law Advocates	Tampa	\$400*	
-	Thomas L. Abrams	Plantation	\$400*	
-	Van Horn Law Group	Fort Lauderdale	\$400*	
29	Edelboim Lieberman Revah Oshinsky	Miami	\$395*	
30	Adams and Reese	Tampa	\$385*	
31	Bartolone Law	Orlando	\$375*	
-	Cole & Cole Law	Sarasota	\$375	
33	Dal Lago Law	Naples	\$370*	
34	Adam Law Group	Jacksonville	\$350*	\$250*

Rank	Law Firm	Office	Partner Billing Rate Avg	Associate Billing Rate Avg
-	David W. Langley	Fort Lauderdale	\$350*	
-	Law Offices of L. William Porter III	Orlando	\$350*	
-	Michael L. Feinstein	Fort Lauderdale	\$350*	\$300*
-	Wilson, Harrell, Farrington, Ford, Wilson, Spain & Parsons	Pensacola	\$350*	
39	The Law Offices of Jason A. Burgess	Atlantic Beach	\$335*	\$200*
-	Michael Barnett	Tampa	\$325*	
-	Nardella & Nardella	Orlando	\$325*	\$275*
-	Bruner Wright	Tallahassee	\$325	
43	Albareda & Associates	Miami	\$300*	
-	FL Legal Group	Tampa	\$300*	
-	Law Offices of Scott W. Spradley	Flagler Beach	\$300*	
-	Sagre Law Firm	Miami	\$300*	
-	Sheila Norman Law Chartered	Tampa	\$300*	
-	White-Boyd Law	West Palm Beach	\$300*	
-	Wilcox Law Firm	Ponte Vedra Beach	\$300*	
-	Zalkin Revell	Santa Rosa Beach	\$300	\$285*
51	Winderweedle, Haines, Ward & Woodman	Winter Park	\$295*	
52	Feher Law	St. Petersburg	\$275*	
53	Cohen & Depaul	Tampa	\$250*	
54	Blanchard Law	Largo	\$275	
-	Brian K. McMahon	West Palm Beach	\$400*	
-	Charles M. Wynn Law Offices	Marianna	\$325	
-	Dsouza Law Group	Plantation	\$300	
-	Kelley & Fulton	West Palm Beach	\$450	
-	Law Offices of Benjamin Martin	Sarasota	\$400*	
-	Law Offices of Rehan N. Khawaja	Jacksonville	\$325*	
-	ORSHAN	Miami	\$363	
-	Ruff & Cohen	Gainesville	\$325*	
-	Steven M. Fishman	Clearwater	\$325*	
-	Sue Lasky	Fort Lauderdale	\$400*	
-	The Law Offices of Slatkin & Reynolds	Fort Lauderdale	\$375*	
-	The Perry Law Firm	Ocala	\$300*	
-	Thomas C. Little	Clearwater	\$350	
-	Timothy W. Gensmer	Sarasota	\$300	