

A Law Firm Focused on Clients' Construction Law Needs

New York Legal

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Zetlin & De Chiara LLP

In 1992, Michael Zetlin and Michael De Chiara saw the need for a substantial and quality law firm composed solely of attorneys who focus on, understand and speak the language of "design and construction," and they founded Zetlin & De Chiara LLP. Senior Partners Ray Mellon and Carol Patterson soon came on board and, together, they built one of the premier construction law firms in the nation. The firm is highly regarded as the go-to boutique resource in construction law. In addition to the four founding partners, seven other partners support its focused legal work.

Michael Zetlin explains, "Because we know the industry so well, we understand our clients' business needs and their legal needs. Few firms on the East Coast can match our connections and depth of involvement with the construction industry."

Adds Michael De Chiara, "Our aim was to bring Wall Street-quality legal services to the design and construction industries, and we have surpassed that goal." Today, the firm serves a diverse client base including public, corporate and institutional owners; residential and commercial property developers; lenders, engineers, architects, contractors and others involved in the construction process, advising as well as litigating on complex construction projects throughout the United States and abroad.

Big Problems Resolved

Zetlin & De Chiara's reputation has been strengthened by the successful results it has obtained for clients involved in a wide variety of complex litigations. As an illustration, the firm had a lead representation role in a \$300 million litigation relating to a high-profile casino parking garage collapse in Atlantic City that caused four deaths, 36 serious injuries and over \$500 million in property damage. Recently, the firm reached a favorable settlement in a litigation of more than \$65 million in claims related to cost overruns on a major infrastructure project.



From left: Managing Partner Patricia A. Harris and Senior Partners Carol J. Patterson, Michael K. De Chiara, Michael S. Zetlin and Raymond T. Mellon

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Big Deals Completed

Zetlin & De Chiara is well known for its business savvy and innovation, particularly in the area of contract preparation and negotiation. Throughout its history, the firm has been at the table negotiating all types of public- and private-sector construction projects including infrastructure; transportation systems; major office, residential and mixed-use projects; retail; hospitality; educational; healthcare and sports facilities. As an example, a major international financial institution turned to Zetlin & De Chiara for representation when it embarked on construction of its new U.S. headquarters.

According to Carol Patterson, "Our in-depth understanding of the construction industry enables us to develop and negotiate contracts that serve as a strong foundation for successful projects. This is a fundamental strength of our practice." Other examples of the firm's work include representation of a major owner/developer relating to the design and construction of numerous high-rise LEED-certified projects and representation of a national sports organization in connection with the renovation of the sports affiliate's facilities. The firm is proud to have served the award-winning architect of the World Trade Center Site Memorial in negotiations with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation.

A Strong Foundation

"Our work has always been about the construction industry; we have interesting assignments and deliver high-quality product and winning results for our clients," explains Ray Mellon. Giving back to the industry is an important theme at Zetlin & De Chiara. To that end, the firm serves as general counsel to and its partners sit on the boards of many real estate, construction and design organizations. Partners of the firm also serve on the faculty of Columbia University's graduate program in construction administration, and several of the firm's attorneys hold engineering or architecture degrees.

Partners Timothy Hegarty, Michael Vardaro, Lori Samet Schwarz, Scott Winikow, James Terry and Lina Telese continue to advance the firm's reputation as they meet the needs of local, regional, national and global clients. For the past three years, the *Legal 500 USA Guide* has recognized Zetlin & De Chiara as one of the Top Ranked construction litigation firms in the country. Also, *Chambers & Partners USA* has named the firm a "Leading Construction Law Firm" for several years. The firm authored *New York Construction Law*, a definitive and comprehensive treatise.

"We know the construction industry, we have great clients with challenging issues, we have top talent at the firm, and we are proud of how far we've come and where our practice is heading," concludes Michael Zetlin.

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