

Meet The Attys Facing Off In Polsinelli Sexual Harassment Suit

By **Alison Knezevich**

Law360 (November 2, 2023, 2:18 PM EDT) -- The former Washington, D.C.-based Polsinelli PC shareholder suing over alleged sexual harassment has tapped a legal team that includes an attorney who has previously taken on the firm in a discrimination suit and will face off against some of the same lawyers.

Julia I. Rix sued Polsinelli **in September**, alleging two older, married senior partners "insisted on late-night rendezvous, communicated their sexual interest in her and forced unwanted physical intimacy." An international corporate attorney, she says she was fired without cause after reporting the alleged misconduct to the head of human resources.

Her attorneys include William A. Brewer III of Brewer Attorneys & Counselors, who told Law360 Pulse that Rix's case is a "story that we believe needs to be told." Rix's complaint says law firms have used "law firm-friendly, confidential arbitration agreements" to shield misconduct from public scrutiny.

"We are proud to represent her and to bring the case into the public conversation," Brewer said.

For its defense, Polsinelli has turned to a team from Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani LLP, including attorneys who have previously defended the firm against discrimination claims brought by Brewer's firm.

Polsinelli has denied that Rix was subjected to sexual harassment, a hostile work environment or retaliation, and has said that it takes "allegations of harassment and discrimination very seriously," with robust reporting procedures in place.

In a motion **filed last week**, the firm and another defendant, New York office managing partner Gabriel Y. Dabiri, asked the court to dismiss a portion of the suit and compel arbitration on other claims. The firm said Rix did not meet performance standards for an equity shareholder and didn't report any allegations until after the firm's board decided to terminate her employment, at which point it said she "submitted a vague letter" claiming she was harassed.

Also named as a defendant is Dov H. Scherzer, described in the suit as a senior shareholder. Dabiri and the firm are represented by the Gordon Rees team, while Scherzer is represented by attorneys from Jackson Lewis PC. Scherzer this week **filed a motion** to dismiss claims against him.

Here, Law360 Pulse takes a look at the counsel in the suit.

For the Plaintiff

Representing Rix are attorneys from the litigation boutique Brewer Attorneys & Counselors and from Briglia Hundley PC.



William A. Brewer III

Brewer, Attorneys & Counselors

Brewer is a well-known Dallas attorney who co-founded firm predecessor Bickel & Brewer in 1984.

The Brewer firm, which has offices in Dallas and New York, made headlines this year when it said it would **increase first-year associate salaries** to \$250,000 a year, at a time when several large firms were laying off attorneys and staff.

Brewer has represented the National Rifle Association in matters including New York Attorney General Letitia James' high-profile self-dealing suit against the organization.

Brewer has litigated against Polsinelli before. He represented a former shareholder in its bankruptcy practice who in 2021 accused the firm of discriminating against him because he is gay. The firm said the attorney had performance and collection issues and that he mistreated female colleagues. The parties later agreed to arbitrate the dispute.

Brewer was the subject of a **closely watched 2020 ruling** by the Texas Supreme Court, which overturned a trial court's \$135,000 sanction against him. A trial judge ordered the sanction after finding Brewer had conducted a pretrial telephone poll "designed to improperly influence a jury pool" while he was defending a manufacturer in a fatal gas pipeline explosion case. Brewer has stood by his actions and told Law360 Pulse "there was

no improper behavior on my firm's part."

The firm has a pro bono affiliate called the Brewer Storefront, whose work includes bringing lawsuits under the Voting Rights Act on behalf of Black and Latino voters in North Texas.

A Long Island native, Brewer graduated from Albany Law School and earned a master of laws degree in trade regulation from New York University School of Law. He earned his undergraduate degree from St. John's University.

He founded the International Public Policy Forum, a high school debate competition that is supported by the Brewer Foundation and NYU.

The firm has 17 attorneys and 40 other staff members, including financial and management consultants, private investigators, and public affairs strategists.

Working with Brewer on the suit are senior associates Will Brewer IV and Samantha Daniels of the New York office.



Robert H. Cox

Briglia Hundley PC

Robert A. Cox is a commercial trial attorney with the Tysons Corner, Virginia, firm Briglia Hundley PC who litigates business cases and represents clients in government investigations. He also represents accountants in disciplinary proceedings, according to his firm profile.

Before joining the firm, Cox was an assistant director in the enforcement and investigations division at the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, which oversees the audits of public companies.

Before that, he was a partner in Howrey LLP's global litigation group and a business litigation associate with Vinson & Elkins LLP, according to his LinkedIn profile. He is a co-chair of the American Bar Association litigation section's professional liability litigation committee.

Cox earned his law degree and an MBA from the University of Virginia and completed his undergraduate studies at Duke University.

Representing Polsinelli and Dabiri

On the defense side representing Polsinelli and Dabiri are Brian Scotti, Laura E. De Santos and Megan M. Mitchell of Gordon Rees.



Brian A. Scotti

Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani LLP

Scotti is the co-managing partner of San Francisco-founded Gordon Rees' D.C., Virginia and Maryland offices. He is a member of practice groups including employment and commercial litigation.

His Gordon Rees clients have included the operator of the now-shuttered Newseum **in a sex bias suit**, a **staffing company sued** by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in an Americans With Disabilities Act case, and a D.C. **restaurant that faced** an EEOC sexual orientation harassment lawsuit.

Scotti previously practiced at Charlson Bredehoff Cohen Brown & Nadelhaft PC, a Reston, Virginia, firm focused on business and employment litigation, and other firms, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Scotti graduated from the Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law and

earned his bachelor's degree from James Madison University.



Laura E. De Santos

Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani LLP

De Santos is co-managing partner of the firm's Houston office and a member of the firm's employment law group and its drug and medical device group.

She is experienced in representing clients in state and federal courts, as well as defending employers in arbitration and administrative proceedings, according to her firm profile. She provides training on issues such as equal employment and anti-harassment policies, hiring and progressive discipline.

Her clients have included pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, and she has tried cases involving serious injuries, according to her firm profile.

De Santos graduated from the University of Houston Law Center and earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Texas.



Megan M. Mitchell

Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani LLP

Houston-based partner Mitchell, a member of the firm's employment law and product and general liability practice groups, is experienced in representing employers in courts and arbitration, her firm profile says. She also represents clients before agencies such as the EEOC and the Department of Labor.

Mitchell and De Santos previously represented Polsinelli in the lawsuit from the bankruptcy attorney who said the firm discriminated against him because he was gay.

She previously worked at Starzyk and Associates PC, an employment law firm in The Woodlands, Texas, according to her LinkedIn profile.

Mitchell graduated from the Baylor University School of Law and earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Texas.

Representing Scherzer



John M. Remy

Jackson Lewis PC

Representing Scherzer is John M. Remy, a Jackson Lewis PC employment defense litigator and former managing principal of the firm's D.C. region office.

Remy has jury trial experience in four states and represents employers in cases such as those involving allegations of discrimination, retaliation and wrongful termination, according to his firm profile. He also has handled unfair labor practice cases and labor arbitrations, and advises and trains management to help avoid litigation.

His trial experience includes representing Lakeshore Learning Materials in Los Angeles Superior Court; Delta Solutions and Technologies Inc. in Fairfax County, Virginia, Circuit Court; and the nonprofit Counterpart International in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Remy speaks frequently to HR organizations and trade groups, his firm profile said.

He graduated from the University of Michigan Law School and earned his undergraduate degree from Northwestern University.

Working with Remy on the case is Jackson Lewis associate Bernard G. Dennis III.

The case is *Julia I. Rix v. Polsinelli PC et al.*, case number 1:23-cv-03062, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

--Additional reporting by Madison Arnold, Tracey Read, Abby Wargo, Emmy Freedman and Adam Lidgett. Editing by Alex Hubbard.

