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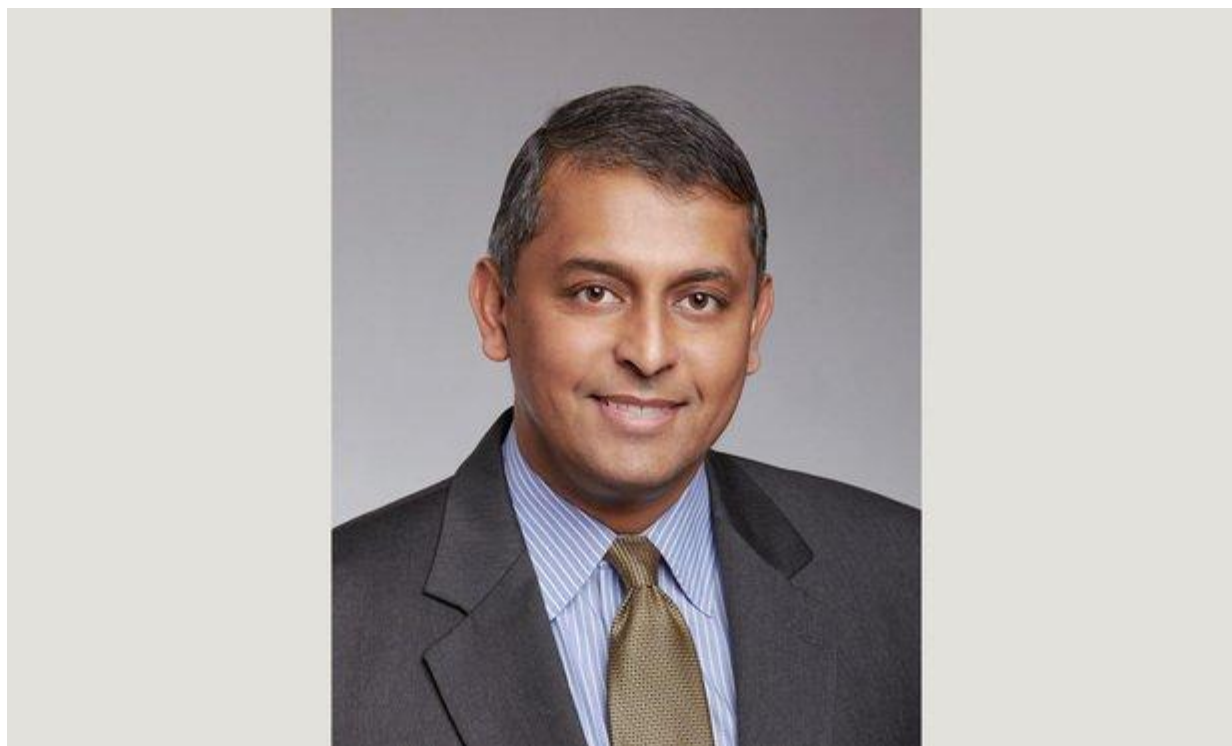
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Meet Murtha Cullina's Incoming Managing Partner Andy Corea

Intellectual property attorney Andy I. Corea, chair of Murtha Cullina's business and finance department, will take over for the outgoing and term-limited Jennifer Morgan DelMonico next Jan. 1.

By Michael Marciano | September 30, 2020



Andy I. Corea Elected Managing Partner of Murtha Cullina. Courtesy Photo

Despite challenges that everyone in the legal space has endured amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the managing partner-elect at Connecticut-based Murtha Cullina says he's optimistic about the industry's outlook for 2021.

Intellectual property attorney Andy I. Corea, chair of Murtha Cullina's business and finance department, will take over for the outgoing and term-limited Jennifer Morgan DelMonico next Jan. 1. The transition will cap off a year of continuous and unprecedented change but also a string of successes, he said, that have kept the firm healthy and busy.

An experienced trademark practitioner, Corea appears regularly before the United States Trademark Trial and Appeal Board and has represented clients in federal court cases across the country. In addition, he is an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut School of Law. With all of that on his plate, Corea said he didn't start the year with the goal in mind of becoming managing partner.

"I'm not one of those people who has pushed or thought of myself as actively seeking a leadership position," he said. "I try to do my job really well, and I try to be someone who my clients and colleagues trust. I think what my selection revealed is that's a pretty good approach. What it reflects more than anything else is that I have the trust of a group of people who I trust and think very highly of a great deal."

Corea said meetings and memos regarding a new managing partner began earlier this year, with DelMonico's final year in office. "It's an elongated process," he said. "The executive committee, at the point that the term of the prior managing partner is ending, interviews all the partners and talks about their ideas on who would be a good potential successor. After that round of initial interviews, a couple people on the executive committee told me my name had come up several times and they asked if it was something I would be interested in doing." When Corea heard that a number of other partners had recommended him, he put his name into the running, he said, adding that he has particularly high regard for DelMonico, his predecessor, who will return to her full-time practice as a trial lawyer for corporate clients in products liability and commercial litigation disputes.

"Jen will be a tough act to follow very—a very tough act to follow," Corea said. "She and I hit it off from the first time I interviewed, and I have the highest respect for her and the way she's led the firm. She's really well-known in the legal community, and in the business community, and I will have a high standard to meet. I'm going to do everything I can to meet that."

DelMonico called Corea "a dynamic and effective leader with the vision, judgment, and demeanor to lead Murtha Cullina through a period of persistent change," adding, "we are looking forward to continued growth and development under Andy's leadership for the benefit of our clients and our business."

Corea said the managing partner position at Murtha is not a full-time role, but "it may be an all-consuming role" requiring giving up some of his normal duties. "The managing partner is expected to continue practicing law, with the understanding that the firm is now your biggest client, if you want to think of it that way," he said. As Corea focuses on the business of the firm, he will have opportunities to continue his work defending the intellectual property rights of his corporate clients, but a designee will also help cover some of that work.

"My practice is probably one that lends itself to keeping my hand in it to some degree, and I like what I do," Corea said. "And one former managing partner told me sometimes it's really nice to be able to step away from firm management and do some of your traditional work to keep your balance. I'm still my clients' lawyer, but I will also have someone there to pick up the work."

Corea said he expects the toughest challenges will be those being shared by firm managers across the state and the country amid the ongoing pandemic. "Everybody in our space is going through the same range of financial challenges that we are facing," he said. "But we had the benefit of some really great transactions that went through this year that have positioned us for next year."

The firm's successes include being named the 2019-2020 Appellate Practice Group of the Year by this publication.

Born in Sri Lanka in 1970, Corea said his family "moved around a fair bit" when he was young before settling in the United States in 1988. During his years as a young lawyer, he joined the South Asian Bar Association of Connecticut, which he calls "a great group" for which he has served as president. Corea is the first person from the South Asian community to become a managing partner at Murtha, and is the first South Asian managing partner in memory at a major Connecticut firm.

"It's pretty meaningful to me to be the first South Asian managing partner at Murtha and possibly the first person of color to be a managing partner of a firm this size in Connecticut," Corea said. "There's a huge honor and sense of duty and obligation that comes with that."

Corea said he is also proud of the work being done by Murtha Cullina's information technology department, which helped steer the firm through this year's migration to virtual office work amid COVID-19, and is expected to play a crucial role in the coming year.

"For us, as a midsize firm, we really need to leverage our tech to remain competitive, and like every other industry, everything in the legal market is being squeezed and commoditized," Corea said. "We need to manage our technology very effectively and get the most out of it." COVID-19 has created an environment that has put those skills to the test.

"A lot of my clients are tech clients, and the IP group clients are very technical. I think the IP group here was probably the best suited for the remote environment, and it was pretty seamless for us, because we are used to working on electronic documents," Corea said. "We file everything at the patent office and trademark office electronically so we're used to working in that virtual environment. I think it's harder for practices like real estate, which tend to deal with the physical more than the virtual."

It is also work by Murtha's real estate lawyers that has helped keep the firm on solid footing. "They have deals that involve large piles of documents that need to be signed, so that was a challenge. We had a lot of very significant closings between March and September that required really creative solutions to get things done."

Between hand-delivering documents to getting things into the mail last-minute, Corea said people worked together very well to accomplish tasks. "I think that was the biggest thing I took away from that," he said. "People, when pushed by terrible circumstances, can really come through and will be creative and will find a way to make things happen."

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