

ABC Update

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James J. Tancredi Sworn In for District of Connecticut Bench

At an investiture ceremony conducted in the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut on Dec. 1, 2016, before a packed ceremonial courtroom of jurists, lawyers, family and friends, **James J. Tancredi** was sworn in as the newest bankruptcy judge for the District of Connecticut, joining Chief Judge **Julie A. Manning** and Judge Ann Nevins. Together, Judges Manning, Nevins and Tancredi comprise Connecticut's panel of bankruptcy judges, all having ascended to the bench within the past three years.

Judge Tancredi began his legal career in 1979 with Connecticut-based Day, Berry & Howard (now known as Day Pitney), becoming a partner in 1986. He was born and reared in Hartford, Conn., where he now presides as bankruptcy judge. Prior to taking his position on the bench, Judge Tancredi served as the chair of the Day Pitney's Bankruptcy, Reorganization and Distressed Assets Practice Group from 1999 to 2013. He is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross (1976) and the University of Connecticut School of Law (1979), having graduated *magna cum laude* from each school. While he was in law school, Judge Tancredi served as managing editor of the *UConn Law Review*. An ABI member since 1986, Judge Tancredi was among the very first Connecticut attorneys to be certified as business bankruptcy specialists by the American Board of Certification in 1994.

As a young attorney at Day Berry & Howard, Judge Tancredi was tapped by senior partner John "Jay" Nolan to help create what became one of the most experienced and formidable insolvency practice groups in the area. He has had roles in a wide variety of cases, including the *Lehman, GM, Madoff, Coudert* and *Vestiq Pharmaceutical* cases. He also contributed to the involuntary chapter 11 proceeding of *In re Public Service of New Hampshire*,¹ as well as appeals in the cases of *Retained Realty v. McCabe*² and *Matrix Realty Group Inc. v. Food Management Group LLC*.³ Judge Tancredi has frequently had a role in many of the significant bankruptcy cases filed in Connecticut, in one capacity or another. He has regularly been recognized by his peers as a "Top Lawyer" by *Corporate Counsel* and as a *Connecticut Super Lawyer*. On multiple occa-

sions, he was chosen for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in New York*.



Hon. James J. Tancredi

While Judge Tancredi's practice has engaged him in many courts and cases throughout the nation, many of his most significant contributions have been in Connecticut. Not surprisingly, having been born and reared in Hartford and having had Hartford as the home base of his practice since its inception, Judge Tancredi has been

a very active member of the Hartford County Bar Association (HCBA) — one of the oldest bar associations in the nation — serving on its board of directors for many years and culminating as its president for 2011-12.

During his tenure as president and afterward, Judge Tancredi was an avid proponent for the adoption by the Connecticut Superior Court Rules Committee of a continuing legal education requirement, which was adopted by the judges of the Superior Court in 2016 and became effective on Jan. 1, 2017. In advocating for the adoption of this rule, Judge Tancredi once said that for the benefit of the profession, clients and the bench, lawyers should "level the playing field through knowledge sharing." And share knowledge he did. In addition to his regular contributions to the resource of legal literature and written commentary in journals, books, client alerts and countless continuing legal education programs, Judge Tancredi was noteworthy for his willingness and eagerness to share ideas about the law and practice with his colleagues — or anyone who would listen!

On a personal level, and while in private practice, Judge Tancredi has been very active in availing himself of continuing legal education opportunities from many sources. He has been a regular attendee of ABI conferences and the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges. He has attended restructuring programs at the Wharton School of Business. While often an attendee at such programs, Judge Tancredi has also been a frequent panelist for educational programs sponsored by bar associations and clients and at in-house programs at Day Pitney.

One of the concrete demonstrations of Judge Tancredi's belief in the importance of fostering a continued experience of professional growth



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1 114 B.R. 820 (Bankr. D.N.H. 1988).

2 Nos. 08-5269-cv(L), 09-2377-cv, 09-3186-cv, 2010 WL 1790349 (2d Cir. May 5, 2010).

3 No. 08 Civ. 5956(DAB), 2010 WL 3911482, (S.D.N.Y. Sept. 21, 2010).

through education was the Connecticut Bankruptcy Symposium. Beginning in 1996, Judge Tancredi was among the leaders of a group that first created — and then continued to present over the years — an annual symposium, presented in conjunction with the judges of the bankruptcy bench at the time, the Quinnipiac University School of Law, leaders of the Bar and guest speakers drawn from around the nation. The symposium became one of the signature legal education opportunities for practicing attorneys in Connecticut.

In 1996, at the invitation of the late Hartford bankruptcy judge Robert L. Krechevsky, Judge Tancredi was placed at the center of a small group of HCBA members who were charged with coming up with a local rule to provide a framework for a volunteer mediation program for cases that could not carry the cost of private mediation. The volunteer program was one that would divert adversary proceedings and similar litigation into a volunteer program for mediation by a member of a pre-approved panel of qualified and highly experienced bankruptcy practitioners. The panel of volunteer mediators was drawn from HCBA members and routinely vetted and approved by the Hartford bankruptcy court. This program has allowed numerous oppositions to discharge- and avoidance-type actions to be resolved by the parties without the expense of extensive litigation, or the expenditure of the court's precious time.

While in private practice, Judge Tancredi was similarly involved in the Connecticut chapter of the Turnaround Management Association (TMA) as a longtime member, and served as its president in 2006 and chairman in 2007. As with his other professional activities, Judge Tancredi used his participation and office with the Connecticut TMA chapter to foster education and knowledge-sharing within that unique organization, which brings together turnaround experts from multiple disciplines. As Judge Tancredi has remarked, such activities, in programs that can be both enjoyable and educational, serve to “fuel the hunger to learn.”

Although his practice generally can be categorized as involvement in “big cases” — with a heavy dose of professional association activity for the advancement of the profession — Judge Tancredi also had a clear vision of the need for the bench and the bar to honor their obligations for *pro bono* service. Among the ways that Judge Tancredi fulfilled his duty to this obligation and set an example for others, he envisioned the creation of a *pro bono* expense fund. Recognizing that even with lawyers volunteering to take on *pro bono* bankruptcy cases there was always the dilemma of covering litigation costs, he was instrumental in creating the Robert L. Krechevsky Memorial Pro Bono Fund. The fund was a project undertaken in connection with the Connecticut Bar Association's Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Section, which has worked actively with the bankruptcy judges in the District of Connecticut to create pathways for greater lawyer involvement in *pro bono* representation. Establishing and finding the funding for the Krechevsky Pro Bono Fund serves to help clear that pathway.

In addition to dedication to his profession, Judge Tancredi has found time to make substantial and meaningful contributions to his community. He has been a board member of the Connecticut Mental Health Association and served as an interim board member of the Farmington Valley Arts Center, also successfully filling the role of restructuring advisor. In addition, Judge Tancredi has provided *pro bono* consulting services to numerous nonprofit entities in and around his community.

After taking the bench, Judge Tancredi confided to some of his former colleagues at the Bar, “There is a lot of humanity that appears before this Bench.” Clearly, he was reflecting on what he already knew as a member of the Bar and now even more fully discerns as a member of the bench. The mantle of the black robe is a weighty one, and Judge Tancredi has been preparing to take on that weight since his days growing up in Hartford. No doubt his colleagues on the bench, and his former colleagues at the Bar, will look forward to his continued journey in carrying that weight in the years to come. **abi**

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