



# Akron Legal News

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## akron bar association



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### PHONE NUMBERS

Area code 330  
unless otherwise indicated

#### Community Services

Alcoholics Anonymous  
253-8181

Battered Women's Shelter  
1-888-395-(HELP) 4357

Community Legal Aid Services  
535-4191

Fair Housing Contact Service Inc.  
376-6191

Rape Crisis Center  
1-877-906-(RAPE) 7273

Summit County Juvenile Court  
Family Resource Center  
379-3613

#### Visitors Information

Akron/Summit County  
Convention & Visitors Bureau  
374-7560  
Toll Free 1-800-245-4254

#### Transportation

Akron-Canton Regional Airport  
499-4221

Akron METRO Bus System  
762-0341

Greyhound Bus Lines 434-9185

Neo Executive Sedans & Taxi  
777-5454

**Note:** Due to the coronavirus (covid-19), we have made the decision to split our workforce into two teams and modify our hours of operation. Support will be available through all of our normal channels. Our employees are all working towards the common goal of continuing to deliver the legal news to our clients. Our modified hours of operation are M-F 9am-1pm. We will remain in touch with any updates and wish you good health and peace of mind.

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## Buckingham adds attorneys and opens new office

**SHERRY KARABIN**  
Legal News Reporter

Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs kicked off the beginning of 2021 by opening a new office in downtown Akron and adding six more attorneys to its litigation and business practice areas.

Former Niekamp, Weisensell, Mutersbaugh & Mastrantonio Managing Partner Christopher Niekamp, of counsel Carmen Roberto, of counsel Thomas Delventhal, associates Wade Doerr and Justin Tjaden and sole practitioner Stephen Pruneski all started at the regional law firm on Jan. 4.

As Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs (BDB) Managing Partner Steve Dimengo explains, it's all part of a strategic move to expand and enhance the firm's legal team and geographical footprint to better serve its clients.

"We have had some very good momentum despite the pandemic," Dimengo said. "I'm very happy to report that through careful management of expenses and the continued influx of new clients, we have been able to avoid layoffs or furloughs."

"We've also been able to continue to invest in our infrastructure and service our clients without missing a beat. This also includes adding attorneys throughout the prior year ranging from new associates to some of the most reputable and experienced attorneys in the region, further enhancing our impeccable expertise, experience and culture."

"All six of the lawyers who joined us in January had a strong interest and were very passionate about being part of our firm," said Dimengo. "They will enhance the energy and excitement that we're already experiencing."

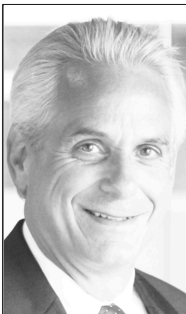
The new attorney hires will be working out of the firm's two Akron offices, with Delventhal and the two associates stationed in the downtown office, which is located in the historic Nantucket Building on the same floor as Niekamp's former law firm.

"Our main Akron office is in Fairlawn," said Dimengo. "However, for most of the firm's history we had a downtown Akron location, and this new office is a return to our roots so to speak. Some of us who've been here for many years missed being downtown and we believe the office is a good investment and will lead to further growth in downtown Akron."

The firm also has locations in Canton and Cleveland.

While Buckingham partner Stephen Pruneski plans to mentor litigation associate Justin Tjaden, commercial real estate and banking law litigator Wade Doerr and business and finance lawyer Thomas Delventhal will continue to work closely with Niekamp.

A partner in Buckingham's litigation and business practice groups, Niekamp said BDB's commitment to having a presence



**Steve Dimengo**



**Christopher Niekamp**



**Stephen Pruneski**



**Carmen Roberto**

in downtown Akron was one of the many reasons he decided to join the firm.

"Buckingham was a very good fit for me because it will enable me to work in a collaborative environment and grow my practice," said Niekamp, who focuses on representing national banks in creditors' rights matters and small businesses in various aspects of corporate law. "It will also provide opportunities to the associates to grow their practices in downtown Akron. I will also be working out of the downtown office. I enjoy working downtown and am looking forward to downtown improvements when completed."

"I actually started my career at Buckingham and have worked with many Buckingham attorneys over the years," Niekamp said. "I have always been impressed by their professionalism, collegiality and legal acumen."

A native of Akron, Niekamp received his bachelor's degree in business from Miami University in Ohio and his juris doctor from Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

After spending a year at Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, Niekamp joined Tramonte, Kot & Davis.

Prior to starting his law firm with attorney Mark Bernlohr in 2000, he was an associate at what is now Roderick Linton Belfance.

"For most of my legal career, the setup has been 'eat what you kill,' so to speak," said Niekamp. "It was a great training ground because it taught me how to hustle, work efficiently and manage my practice."

"However, I got to the point where many of my clients needed additional expertise that was not available at my firm. I initially tried to grow the firm's practice internally by recruiting and training younger attorneys but found it difficult to retain good talent. Also, my growing clients had legal needs in the areas of labor law, intellectual property and litigation and Buckingham fortunately has great experienced attorneys in these areas of the law."

"Buckingham offers its attorneys a lot of support and takes a team approach, which is very beneficial to my clients."

During his tenure at his former firm, Niekamp was hired to serve as the liquidation agent for the now-defunct Day Ketterer firm. "It was a tough situation, but it provided me with insights as to how firms can do well and how things can go bad."

Council. He also arbitrates fee disputes for the OSBA.

In addition, Roberto is an ex-officio member of the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program and a former president of the Ohio Metropolitan Bar Association.

In 2017, Roberto received the Professionalism Award.

Roberto said he's really enjoying his new role at Buckingham.

"At this point, retirement is off the table for the foreseeable future," said Roberto. "As long as Buckingham has the need for my services I plan to keep practicing."

In the case of Pruneski, he became enamored with the legal profession at Girard High School.

"I enjoy working through problems and finding quick solutions to disputes whenever possible," said Pruneski, who focuses on business and real estate litigation. "I love the challenge of working with our clients to tell their story in the clearest and most convincing way."

Born in Youngstown and raised in the Trumbull County community of Girard, he majored in political science and economics at Youngstown State University, receiving his bachelor's degree in 1982. After graduating from Akron Law in 1985, he began his career at a small firm in the city.

In 1988, he joined the firm now known as Roderick Linton Belfance, where he became a partner and served as managing partner for seven years.

From 2000 to 2016, Pruneski was also the law director for the city of Green.

Prior to beginning at Buckingham, he was a sole practitioner for two years.

"I'm ecstatic to get the chance to work at Buckingham," said Pruneski. "They have a supportive and collaborative environment, where everyone works together to provide the best possible services to clients."

"I spent most of my career at a firm. When I opened my solo practice I really missed being able to discuss problems and issues with other attorneys."

"I am now focused on being a team player," he said. "There are many incredibly talented lawyers at Buckingham with a wide variety of experience. I want to help everyone with their cases and clients any way I can."

"I want to work closely with Justin and other young attorneys of the firm to mentor them and give them the benefit of my years of litigation experience," he said.

Pruneski lives in Green with his wife Nancy. They have two adult daughters, an adult son and one grandchild.

A member of the Ohio State Bar Association and a sustaining member of the Akron Bar Association, Pruneski has spent more than 15 years coaching the mock trial team at Green High School.

"I love mentoring those students," he said. "There's no greater joy than providing guidance to the next generation of lawyers."