

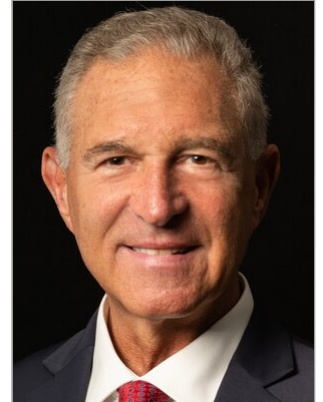
NJ Chief Magistrate Judge Jumps From Bench To Walsh Pizzi

By **Nick Muscavage**

Law360 (September 30, 2021, 4:02 PM EDT) -- Walsh Pizzi O'Reilly Falanga LLP is gaining a new head of its mediation, arbitration and special master appointments practice, and he is joining the firm from his recent post as chief magistrate judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey.

Judge Mark Falk, who retired from the bench Monday, is starting at Newark-based Walsh Pizzi on Friday, bringing with him more than four decades of legal experience.

Judge Falk, who has served as a magistrate judge since 2002 and as the chief magistrate judge since 2019, said he decided to make the transition to Walsh Pizzi because he was looking to continue working in mediation and arbitration.



Mark Falk

"In a way, I'm going to carry on what I was doing on the bench, but in the private world, which has some slight differences to it," he told Law360 Pulse. "But beyond that, for me, it's still pretty much the same type of work I am hoping to be able to do."

Before becoming a judge, Judge Falk worked in private practice for 25 years, the majority of which was spent at Clapp Eisenberg in Newark before the firm disbanded. He also worked at Tompkins McGuire Wachenfeld & Barry LLP.

During that time, however, he said he always felt a calling for the bench.

"I've always wanted to be a judge and, in my case, I've always wanted to be a magistrate judge rather than a district judge or state court judge, and I guess part of it is because of what magistrate judges do," he said, "which, especially in New Jersey, is spend a lot of time mediating cases and deciding discovery disputes and things like that."

While a magistrate judge, Judge Falk would conduct at least two mediations or settlement conferences a day, he said.

"You deal with a tremendous volume of different kinds of cases, and you deal with a lot of people all day long," he explained. "I've spent 20 years doing thousands of settlement conferences and mediations, and I intend to continue doing that over at the Walsh firm."

Judge Falk's experience as a judge and an attorney is what stood out to the firm, according to Liza M. Walsh, founding partner of Walsh Pizzi.

"Over his 20 years of dedicated service on the bench, Judge Falk earned an unparalleled reputation for fairness as a jurist, for his skills as a facilitator in resolving disputes, and for his native brilliance," Walsh told Law360 Pulse. "With that record of accomplishments, and with our lawyers knowing Judge Falk up close from having appeared before him hundreds of times, it was not a difficult decision for us to seek him out to lead our mediation, arbitration and special master appointments practice."

Judge Falk, who was the first chief magistrate judge for the U.S. District Court of the District of New

Jersey, is the latest addition to Walsh Pizzi, a firm still growing after **Walsh founded it in 2016** following her stint as managing partner of the Newark office and chair of the litigation group at Connell Foley LLP.

A current adjunct professor at Fordham University School of Law, Falk also served as the president of the Federal Magistrate Judges Association, which Walsh said is "a signal of his national stature."

"Lawyers with Judge Falk's skills are in demand for high stakes matters no matter where the underlying dispute or litigation is pending," she said. "Having Judge Falk with us will enhance the stature of Walsh Pizzi not only in the states where we have offices but also nationally, enabling us to better serve our clients."

The position at Walsh Pizzi is also special to Judge Falk for another reason: his friend and former colleague, Joel A. Pisano, worked in the firm's mediation, arbitration and special master appointments practice **before he died in February**. Pisano was a retired judge who served as a magistrate judge and district judge for the U.S. District Court of the District of New Jersey.

"He was a personal friend and an excellent judge," Judge Falk said. "I'm thrilled, in a way, to take over for him."

Most importantly, though, Judge Falk said he is eager to continue his work assisting people during disputes.

"I have a lot of experience with the law and lawyers, but there are skills involved in mediation and arbitration, and I've had a lot of practice with that," he said. "Really, it has to do with knowing what motivates people and helping them come together and resolve cases."

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.

Update: This story has been updated to include more biographical information about Walsh and Pisano.