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Bauman tapped to lead employee-benefits group at Blitman & King

By Kevin Tampone

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SYRACUSE — Even after 75 years, Syracuse labor law firm Blitman & King, LLP has no trouble staying motivated, says Timothy Bauman, partner.

“If you take a breath, if you slow down, you will get surpassed in terms of your knowledge and expertise,” he says. “You can’t stop.”

Bauman took over Jan. 1 as chairman of Blitman’s employee-benefits practice. Ten of the firm’s 16 attorneys have significant employee-benefits practices, he adds, making the area a major part of the firm’s work.

Blitman & King also works on general labor and employment issues and works extensively with unions. In fact, the law firm’s work with the labor movement early in its history helped lead to the strong employee-benefits practice it has today, Bauman says.

The firm was helping unions and employers design benefit plans long before the federal government came to regulate them, he says.

Today, Blitman & King represents more than 100 benefit plans. Some are the result of collective bargaining, known as Taft-Hartley plans. Others are single-sponsor plans, run by large employers.

Blitman & King has clients throughout New York, as well as in Florida and Massachusetts, Bauman says. The firm has offices in Syracuse, Rochester, and Albany.

The firm’s clients face no shortage of challenges, Bauman says.

“The frequency with which the federal government both enacts legislation and issues final regulations is sometimes breathtaking,” he says.

Pension funds have received substantial federal attention in recent years, he adds. Several pension funds started running into serious funding trouble in the late 1990s and 2000s.

That led Congress to pass the Pension Protection Act of 2006. And while Bauman says most of the plans his firm represents have been well run and well advised, new regulations affect everyone.

Similarly, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) created more work and more rules on the health-insurance side.

“It’s a highly technical area of law,” Bauman says. “You need expertise. The



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regulations continue to issue. It’s never going to stop.”

Bauman says one of the next major areas for new regulation will probably be executive pay, particularly the stock-based compensation plans that have received much public scrutiny in recent years. It’s an area where Blitman could grow, he adds.

“That’s a very complicated area too, that we see fitting in with our expertise,” he says. “It kind of flows naturally from what we already know.”

Bauman also plans to continue growing the work the employee-benefits practice does with both single-sponsor plans and Taft-Hartley plans. The practice is also working to attract clients in additional states in the Northeast and Midwest.

Bauman, a Rochester native, has been with Blitman since 1994. He earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Notre Dame and graduated from Notre Dame Law School in 1993.

He is based in the firm’s Rochester office.

“The way the practice is now, there’s no way to sit on your laurels,” he says. “In the employee-benefits arenas, the competition, I think, is fiercer than ever.” □

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