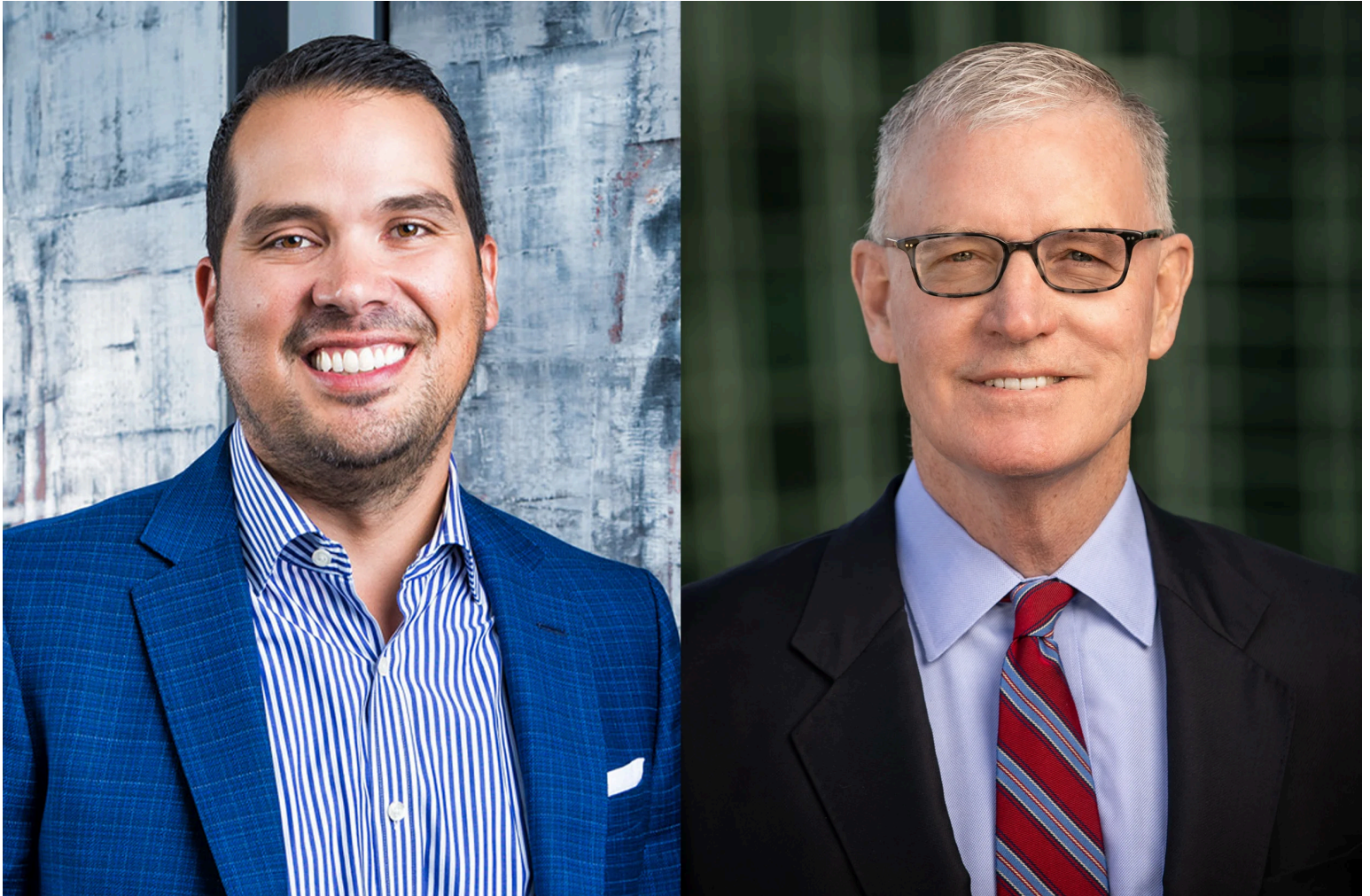


News **Law Firm Mergers**

Fennemore Craig Inks Merger to Grow in Arizona

The combination with Phoenix's Gallagher & Kennedy will boost the firm's ranks to roughly 425 lawyers.

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James Goodnow (L) CEO of Fennemore Craig, and Kevin E. O'Malley (R) of Gallagher & Kennedy.. Courtesy photos

What You Need to Know

- The decision to combine was made after Fennemore CEO James Goodnow had lunch with friend and colleague Shannon Clark, who serves as the co-chair of Gallagher & Kennedy's plaintiffs' personal injury and wrongful death group.
- Fennemore and Gallagher & Kennedy lawyers have known each other and worked side-by-side for many years, so the combination was not really viewed as surprising.

Am Law 200 firm Fennemore Craig has combined with Arizona-based business law firm Gallagher & Kennedy, the move expected to bring together two firms with deeply shared roots in the U.S. Southwest.

The combination will create a law firm—still operating under the Fennemore brand—with around 425 lawyers and an additional 375 or so legal professionals firmwide.

With the combination, the two firms say, clients can expect a broader bench of lawyers and legal services, including Fennemore's proprietary technology and innovation through Project BlueWave AI, as well as new capabilities of counseling in various areas of business law such as natural resources, environmental, water and litigation.

Fennemore says the move represents one of the more significant combinations in Phoenix's legal market in years.

"We are incredibly excited about this combination," Fennemore CEO James Goodnow said in a joint interview alongside Gallagher & Kennedy managing partner and shareholder Kevin O'Malley. "We have known Gallagher & Kennedy as a firm for decades, really since its inception at Fennemore. They've always been a pillar of the legal community here in Arizona."

Gallagher & Kennedy is considered to be one of Arizona's longest-standing, full-service law firms and a major regional player with roots dating back to 1978. The firm has built up a reputation for offering quality legal services in areas such as business law, litigation, real estate, environmental work, tax and more.

The firm currently has around 60-plus attorneys sprinkled throughout Phoenix and Santa Fe, New Mexico, and it is known to be a major player when it comes to serving the area's middle-market companies.

The idea for the combination came about during a lunch meeting between Goodnow and Shannon Clark, who serves as co-chair of Gallagher & Kennedy's plaintiffs' personal injury and wrongful death group, according to Goodnow. The two have been friends and colleagues for years.

"We were just catching up over lunch and started talking about the changing legal world, how we have new competitors in the marketplace, technology (and) the impact that's having, expectations of clients and how that's evolving," Goodnow recalled. "And we were discussing the challenge that all law firms face, which is how do we compete with all of these new dynamics going on and preserve what we have?"

During the course of that lunch, Goodnow said, the idea of combining was born.

"We both really saw the overlap of our firms here, and we knew those core values were nearly identical," Goodnow said.

O'Malley, who said he is equally excited about the combination with Fennemore, said he has been with Gallagher & Kennedy since the firm's inception back in 1978. He met the founders, Mike Gallagher and Mike Kennedy, when he was in law school and ended up joining the firm as their first employee.

"The reason that I joined them is that I felt that they had a vision," O'Malley said. "They were dynamic leaders. They knew what they wanted to build and I wanted to be part of that. We were able to start from scratch and build what I think is a very good law firm over the last almost 50 years."

But the challenges in today's legal industry are different from the challenges decades ago, O'Malley said, and he saw the benefit in partnering with a firm of Fennemore's caliber to benefit a wider swath of clients and weather the storms of a changing legal landscape side by side.

"As I sat back and thought about, what is the right platform for our folks for the next 10 and 20 years, and as James and I talked about it, I felt very convinced," O'Malley said. "I saw some of the characteristics that I saw in Mike Gallagher and Mike Kennedy with their vision 50 years ago. I see James as having that vision and that dynamic leadership as we look towards the future."

Goodnow, O'Malley said, has built a great platform during the past five or so years, with multiple strategic combinations that provide the "resources and footprint for us to compete for the next 10 to 20 years."

"And we share the same values," O'Malley said of Fennemore. "It's always been first-class legal work, a place that's fun to work at, commitment to the community. All of those things have been important to both of us, so I felt very strong and got very excited about the prospect that this is the right combination for us for today, but more importantly, for the future for all of our younger folks as they start their careers."

The two firms' offices are coincidentally directly across the street from one another, and while Gallagher & Kennedy has a little time left on its lease, the hope is to one day end up together, O'Malley said.

"In the short term, we may end up keeping some space in this building, probably moving some Fennemore folks over here by practice group, moving some of our folks over there to make sure the integration goes well," he explained. "If we're able to sublease the space we're in now, that would accelerate the fiscal combination, but we're going to do all the things we need to do to make sure that the integration happens as seamlessly as possible."

The two firms view themselves as complementary, each bringing to the table expertise that will likely benefit the other.

Since Fennemore's largest practice area is litigation, Goodnow said the firm is excited about partnering with Gallagher & Kennedy because of that firm's strong expertise in business, finance and tax law.

"One of the marquee practice groups that both firms have is in the area of environmental and natural resources work, and independently, both firms have a very strong reputation, not only within Arizona, but across the region, so when you put these two groups together on the natural resources side, it is going to be just a stellar, superstar team," Goodnow said.

Goodnow also said Gallagher & Kennedy has a strong reputation for its expertise in sports law, which is expected to be a benefit to the combined firm.

O'Malley said Fennemore's platform is developing strongly throughout the western U.S. and will likely be a tremendous boon to lawyers and clients nationwide.

"It's going to provide a lot more bench strength, so to speak, for us across all areas of our practice," O'Malley said. "We've watched each other across the street for years and years. There's story after story where our people have been friends or involved in community activities or bar activities with Fennemore lawyers that it just almost feels like coming home for a lot of our people, so we're very, very excited about the combination."

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