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## ITLA renames HQ for Corboy

Politicians, lawyers turn out for ceremony to remember 'a champion of underdogs'

BY MARC KARLINSKY  
Special to the Law Bulletin

SPRINGFIELD — In the shadow of the Illinois Capitol, a glossy new black sign welcomes visitors to the Philip H. Corboy Center for Justice — the headquarters of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association.

At a ceremony Wednesday, ITLA renamed its 401 W. Edwards St. building to honor its former president and one of the Illinois legal community's eminent figures.

Current ITLA President Gregory L. Shevlin — a partner at Cook, Ysursa, Bartholomew, Brauer & Shevlin Ltd. in Belleville — said he worked with the group's executive committee last year to find a way to honor Corboy, a founding partner of Corboy & Demetrio P.C. who died in June at age 87.

"Someone who's devoted that much time for so many people should be honored," Shevlin said.

A few dozen attorneys, colleagues, relatives and friends of Corboy, including Gov. Patrick J. Quinn and Senate President John J. Cullerton, gathered inside the ITLA offices to share stories and remarks about him.

Cullerton related a tale from his time studying at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, also Corboy's alma mater.

In 1974, Cullerton, as president of Loyola's student bar association, and a few classmates decided to sue the university in an attempt to improve school facilities.

Cullerton and his friends went to the Corboy & Demetrio offices unannounced, where Corboy saw them immediately.

"He's very intimidating, if you remember," Cullerton said. "But

we're sitting there, and he looks at the complaint, reads the complaint, took like 15 minutes — we just sat there."

Within a few minutes, Corboy had Loyola's president on the phone, speaking with Cullerton and his classmates — and finding a settlement that avoided a lawsuit.

"The time he took to see us, it was just extraordinary," Cullerton said.

Five years later, when Cullerton won a seat in the Illinois House, he said he quickly recognized Corboy's influence lobbying on behalf of ITLA.

"He was, as you know, the most impressive, most important person in Springfield as well, because he constantly worked for legislation that would protect folks that needed protection," Cullerton said.

In his remarks, Quinn said Corboy was "a champion of underdogs, of people who were overlooked, people who fell through the cracks."

"I really feel it's appropriate in our capital ... where justice hopefully is always served, we have a lasting memorial to a great Illinoisan, Phil Corboy," Quinn said.

Philip Harnett Corboy Jr., and

**“Someone who’s devoted that much time for so many people should be honored.”**



Gov. Patrick J. Quinn (seated) listens as Philip Harnett Corboy Jr. tells stories about his father at the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association office in Springfield. The group renamed its headquarters Wednesday in honor of Corboy's father, Phil, who died last year. Marc Karlinsky

his father's wife, Mary A. Dempsey, lifted the veils off the new plaque featuring the elder Corboy's image that ITLA will place in its entryway.

"They got the hair just right," Dempsey said.

Dempsey, president of the Philip H. Corboy Foundation and former head of the Chicago Public Library, said her husband would have been honored by the tribute, given the many presidents ITLA's had throughout its history.

"To name the building for Phil, he would be completely and genuinely humbled by that, which is strange to think when you think of his big personality," Dempsey said. "But I also tell you, he would genuinely love this."

Corboy Jr., known as Flip, follows his father both as a partner at Corboy & Demetrio and as a former ITLA president. He said his father taught him from a young age how important ITLA's work is.

"I was proud and happy to

work with him for 26 years before his death," Corboy said. "I had a chance to understand him not only as a father, but also as a lawyer ... and I saw the dedication that he had towards this association, its members and, most importantly, to our clients."

Corboy said his father enjoyed participating in the state's political process.

"He never felt that he was too big to get down and pull up his shirtsleeves and get into what can sometimes be called the 'muck' of Springfield; he didn't mind it," Corboy said. "In fact, he kind of reveled in it."

Corboy said he'll "get a particular kick" out of seeing the sign on the ITLA building whenever he returns to Springfield.

"It will always remind me where my roots came from and where I should insist that my children's roots continue to go, as they grow older," he said.

"And yes — they'll probably become lawyers."