

## MVP: Holland & Knight's Gerald Morrissey

By Linda Chiem

*Law360 (November 4, 2024, 2:52 PM EST)* -- Holland & Knight LLP's Gerald A. Morrissey III advised marine transportation services provider Centerline Logistics in its acquisition of JMB Shipping and a \$425 million debt refinancing, and successfully defended rail giant CSX Transportation in a dispute over detention and demurrage charges, earning him a spot as one of the 2024 Law360 Transportation MVPs.

### His biggest accomplishment over the past year:

In addition to advising clients on maritime-related investments and acquisitions, contracting and financing, Morrissey also has a robust maritime regulatory practice. He advised Centerline Logistics in a pair of blockbuster deals: its February acquisition of JMB Shipping, a maritime asset holding company that owned a fleet of highly desirable Jones Act maritime assets, including liquid tank barges and tugboats, and a \$425 million debt refinancing in December.

While he relishes sealing the big deals and winning key cases for clients, he told Law360 that hiring and recruiting top talent for the firm's maritime industry team is among his biggest accomplishments.

"My biggest accomplishment this year is continuing to build our team," he told Law360. "Because we can't have successes ... without other people that support us. There's a lot of depth to the group."

### Other notable cases he's worked on:

In a deal that closed July 31, Morrissey advised Nova Infrastructure, a middle-market infrastructure private equity firm, on its successful sale of Bold Ocean, and its vessel-owning and -operating subsidiaries, including Schuyler Line Navigation Co., to institutional investors advised by J.P. Morgan Global Alternatives' Global Transportation Group.

"I was proud to be involved with Nova as it led material growth, expansion and improvement of the business, and set up the management team and the company with an expanded foundation for future work in an important government contracting and national defense business," he said. "It is a good



example of what well-directed PE investment can do for expansion of not only enterprise value, but expansion of business services, jobs, and future opportunities."

Morrissey also led a Holland & Knight team that won the dismissal in May of a third-party complaint filed by ocean container carrier Hapag-Lloyd AG against rail carrier CSX Transportation Inc. at the Federal Maritime Commission. The dispute was over \$136,500 in allegedly unreasonable detention and demurrage charges for containers stored at a CSX rail terminal in Nashville, Tennessee.

Detention and demurrage are penalties assessed against shipping customers, motor carriers and other inland operators for the time that container cargo is left sitting, waiting to be loaded or unloaded. Such charges have long been a fraught issue in the maritime shipping industry.

Morrissey successfully argued that the commission lacked jurisdiction over the railroad.

### **What motivates him:**

Morrissey's affinity for ships and cranes and the like aligns nicely with his work as a maritime industry attorney.

"I like the fact that, at the end of the day, there is a business that's really engaging in something and has these large tangible assets that you can point to," he said.

"What I really like is providing solutions. I'm a handy person generally — I like to fix things, build things — and that carries over to my work," he added. "Clients don't hire lawyers because they want lawyers, they usually want to fix something or build something. Being part of that with clients is a huge motivator for me."

### **His advice for junior attorneys:**

Morrissey says it's important for junior attorneys to pay attention to details and to remain curious and invested in their work.

"It's really important for young associates to be empowered in the work that they're doing," he said. "And understand why they're doing the thing that they're being asked to do. What is this for? What's the purpose of this brief or this closing checklist? What are we really trying to do?"

"That is the foundation of empowerment," he added. "This is not just a task you're being asked to do and you deliver it and that's it. ... I would want an associate to try to understand the larger picture of the work that they're doing, and that leads to an associate who can see things and flag things to others."

*--As told to Linda Chiem. Editing by Dave Trumbore.*

*Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2024 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 900 submissions.*