



Total Attorneys Case

In a groundbreaking case illustrating the ever growing role of the Internet in the legal profession, our Professional Liability attorneys successfully persuaded the Connecticut Statewide Grievance Committee to dismiss a disciplinary complaint filed against five Connecticut bankruptcy attorneys who paid to be listed on a promotional website run by Chicago-based Total Attorneys. At an evidentiary hearing in November, 2009, Pullman & Comley attorneys argued on behalf of three of the five Connecticut attorneys whose contracts to be listed on Total Attorneys' interactive websites for consumers seeking bankruptcy information were claimed to violate the restrictions on payments to non-lawyers for recommending a lawyer's services.

In a comprehensive February 2010 decision with a potential impact on attorney disciplinary proceedings around the country, the Connecticut disciplinary committee rejected the claim that the charged attorneys had violated the Rules of Professional Conduct. The hearing committee also rejected a separate claim: that in contracting for the online promotional services at issue, the charged attorneys also had violated the Connecticut felony statute prohibiting an attorney from paying a non-attorney to procure a client.

Nationwide, there have been more than 500 complaints against lawyers in 47 states who participated in Total Attorneys' web-based marketing programs. Connecticut was the first state in which an attorney disciplinary tribunal conducted an evidentiary hearing on such a complaint and the first state to issue a decision.