

Former Superior Court Judge Bolsters Pashman Stein's Public Interest Practice

Retired Union County Superior Court Judge Stuart Peim will assist pro bono clients with immigration, criminal and other matters through the firm's 1-year-old Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center.

By Suzette Parmley

Confessing “a yen to litigate again,” retired Union County Superior Court Judge Stuart Peim has joined Pashman Stein Walder Hayden as pro bono of counsel to advance immigrants’ rights and bolster the firm’s criminal justice practice.

Peim, who retired from the bench in 2018, joined Pashman on Nov. 1, and the move was announced on Nov. 19.

Peim will assist pro bono clients with immigration, criminal and other matters through the firm’s 1-year-old Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center, named after the former New Jersey Supreme Court justice and firm’s general counsel. The center, launched in October 2019, focuses on litigating high-impact cases and providing amicus support to attorneys or groups such as the ACLU of New Jersey and the Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers of New Jersey.

Peim will also consult on cases in the firm’s criminal defense and governmental and internal investigations practice.

“We are honored that Judge Peim recognized the impactful work that we are doing through the Stein Public Interest Center and has chosen to join us, further strengthening our ability to help people in need access legal representation,” firm managing partner Michael S. Stein said in a statement. “Judge Peim is an incredible asset to our firm and to our community. It is very rare to see an attorney as dedicated, taking on a full, pro bono caseload.”

Peim, who turns 68 the day after Christmas, and lives in Jersey City with wife Doris, two spaniels and tropical fish that take up five tanks, said it wasn’t boredom that took him out of retirement.

“I had a yen to litigate again,” said Peim in a phone call on Monday. “I have stuff to do, but there was just enough going on that there were a lot of vulnerable people who needed help.

“I decided I was going to help some people along the way,” Peim (pronounced Pime), a Yankees and Devils season ticket holder and avid fly fisherman, said. “And with this pandemic, having something to do is really good. I can’t go to Yankees



Courtesy photo

Stuart Peim, a former Superior Court judge with Pashman Stein Walder Hayden in Hackensack, New Jersey

games, to Devils games, or to the city (New York) to go out to eat, so I spent today replying to a brief from [a] Third Circuit [case], and it was intellectually challenging.”

Peim said Pashman Stein is giving him the opportunity to pursue pro bono work full time. He won’t be paid for that work, but will be paid if he accepts work from a paying client or if he generates new business for the firm.

“Pashman Stein is a really nice vehicle for me to do this kind of work,” Peim said. “It’s not a case where I do the work only if the price is right.

“It’s not a big challenge to do pro bono work. Doing it right and doing it well—that’s different,” he said.

Peim said his 401(k) and state pension provide him with a nice retirement.

“I’m comfortable and ... was looking for an arrangement where I would have the leeway on what work to take. I felt like this was a very comfortable fit for me,” said Peim. “If I want to do work for paying clients, I can, but if I don’t, I don’t have to. At this point in time, I am just looking to do pro bono work.”

CJ Griffin, executive director of the Stein Public Interest Center and one of this year’s finalists for the Law Journal’s Attorney of the Year award, said in an email on Monday: “Judge Peim shares our values that lawyers should help the vulnerable members of our society. I admire that he is using his retirement to do pro bono work and am thrilled that he has chosen to practice at our firm. With the addition of Judge Peim to the Stein Center, we are able to expand our public interest work to better protect the civil rights of immigrant communities.”

In his 40-plus years practicing law, Peim racked up an impressive resume.

After receiving his law degree in 1970 from Rutgers Law School-Camden, where he said he paid \$420 per semester as an out-of-state student, Peim first clerked for U.S. District Judge Edward N. Cahn in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for one year, then clerked for Judge Francis Van Dusen in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

Peim then went into private practice at Weil, Gotschal & Manges in New York as an associate from 1978 to 1981.

He joined the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey in 1981, and stayed until 1987, serving as deputy chief and chief of the Criminal Division.

For the next 11 years, Peim was a partner at Riker Danzig Scherer Hyland & Perretti in Morristown, focusing on civil Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization cases, white-collar criminal law, and reinsurance and securities fraud.

In 1999 Peim became a Superior Court judge in Union County’s Criminal Part. He remained in the Superior Court until 2018.

Peim said the “original plan” in 2018 was to work for a nonprofit and do pro bono immigration work after retiring from the bench.

“It’s not as easy as it sounded,” recalled Peim. “Most of these places are really not set up to do that. A lot of these places said, ‘We will give you all the pro bono cases you want.’ But I did not want to work out of my home, and I wanted to be able to mentor younger lawyers.”

Peim said he spent the first six months of retirement doing mundane household tasks, and then it was off to work for Legal Services of New Jersey in its immigration unit in Edison. There, he worked with detained immigrants, including children who came over the border and were placed with a relative guardian.

Peim said in that role he felt somewhat limited: his state pension pre-

cluded appearances in state court.

“I came to the conclusion that being of counsel to a firm was my best option,” said Peim. “I would have more leeway on which cases to take.”

“During the course of my career, I have seen many vulnerable people suffer because they did not have access to a lawyer, which is why I have chosen to dedicate my retirement to helping as many of these vulnerable people as possible,” said Peim, who on Monday noted that he had a firm associate and legal assistant helping him author the Third Circuit brief.

Another motivator, he said, was his father. Isaac Peim immigrated from Poland to Argentina, and then Argentina to the United States, during World War II in 1942.

“My father came to this country as an immigrant,” said Peim. “I don’t feel like I am making a sacrifice. People helped my father along the way, and I felt it was time to give back.”

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