

Illinois Powerhouse: Clifford Law Offices

By **Lauraann Wood**

Law360 (September 3, 2025, 4:00 PM EDT) -- Clifford Law Offices PC helped obtain more than \$200 million in verdicts and reported settlements in the past year — not to mention those earned as it continued representing the families of an Ethiopian Air crash's victims — and saw a partner honored for community-focused efforts to diversify the bar.

After 41 years of trying cases, the Chicago-based personal injury firm's triumphs both inside and outside Illinois courtrooms demonstrate what its 30 attorneys can do, earning a spot among Law360's Regional Powerhouses.

"There are obviously bigger law firms that we go up against, and they've got big resources, too, and that's great. But on a one-on-one basis, they can never outgun us ... and they know that," firm founder Bob Clifford told Law360. "We've got a reputation that we are committed. We don't blink. We don't shy away from a difficult task."

The firm spent the past year notching sizable recoveries for clients, including a \$56 million verdict over a plastic surgery patient's death and several confidential settlements over the 2019 crash of Ethiopian Air Flight ET 302. One such Ethiopian Air settlement in July came "literally two minutes" before parties were set to discuss final issues the Friday before trial was set to begin, attorneys said at the time.

And there's no sign that business is slowing, particularly in the plane crash space, according to Clifford, who said he has represented families in every commercial domestic airline crash since an engine problem downed an American Airlines flight in 1979.

Clifford noted two crash cases the firm is currently undertaking. In the first, the clients are the families of three Ethiopian Air crash victims, and that case is set for trial in November. In the second, the firm is representing families in litigation over a midair collision involving an American Airlines jet and a U.S. Army helicopter in Washington, D.C., and that case will likely ramp up as the Ethiopian Air case winds down.

Major pharmacy providers will also face Clifford Law at trial in September, when a group of acute-care hospitals the firm represents is set for a courtroom showdown in national opioid litigation, Clifford said.

"Our stovetop is red-hot on a number of burners, and I expect that to continue," he said.



In the surgery case, Clifford Law partners Brad Cosgrove and Craig Squillace secured what is believed to be a record-high state court verdict in December for the family of Idalia Corcoles, a 39-year-old mother of four who bled to death following a liposuction and tummy tuck procedure by Dr. Ayoub Sayeg. It was not the first case Sayeg faced over a patient's death in Illinois, but this trial is believed to mark the first time a jury found him liable for a death, Cosgrove said.

The firm brought in expert witnesses on plastic surgery, anesthesia and trauma surgery to convince the jury that the clinic had committed institutional failures that contributed to Corcoles' death, Cosgrove said.

"I think that was the most comprehensive approach that was undertaken by any lawyer to represent any client against Dr. Sayeg, and I believe that comprehensive approach was likely something that was very helpful in the courtroom," he said.

Clifford Law highlighted other notable results — including a \$9.3 million verdict against Advocate Health and Hospitals Corp. on behalf of a woman who allegedly experienced 16 months of negligent cardiac and other medical care before she died in March 2018, and a \$5.5 million verdict for a man who allegedly suffered complications from negligent hospital care following a stent procedure.

Partners James Pullos, Sarah King and Clifford also secured a \$16 million settlement against several defendants in October stemming from a rear-end auto crash that caused two parents to lose their child. When it comes to that magnitude of loss, "you have to be able to look people in the eye and have the experience and the power behind you to say, 'I will make this right for you in the best way that I can,'" King said.

"You have to be able to tell them that, and we can do that here, and I feel comfortable telling people that and knowing we can pull it off," she said. "You have to be able to say that with a ton of confidence because you cannot drag people who've been through ... something where you get a half result for them."

King was also dedicating her time to getting female lawyers more engaged with their bar colleagues and communities.

As the state Women's Bar Association president this past year, King said, she focused her tenure on service as members helped at food pantries and showed up in other meaningful ways to serve their neighbors.

Her work on that front — including pursuing equality-focused legislative changes on such topics as paid breast-pumping time for mothers — led the Diversity Scholarship Foundation to present her an award for her efforts to diversify the bar.

Clifford Law also participates in a University of Illinois Chicago Law School trial program, coaching one team of students each semester on how to be the best lawyers they can be. The school also runs an annual trial competition for first-year law students, which it named after Cosgrove.

That sort of giving-back attitude is one Clifford instills in every lawyer at the firm, said King, who also counts co-founding the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association's women's caucus among her accomplishments. Such work can be time-consuming, King said, adding that she's thankful Clifford has helped nurture her

in the roles she's taken on beyond the courtroom.

"If you want there to be a thriving legal community in the future, it's not just showing up to work every day," she said. "This isn't just my job. This is my calling in life, and we have to protect it."

Clifford said, however, that he isn't passing on a community-forward attitude modeled to him from anyone else.

"I've always been this way. I think that's just our obligation," he said.

"I believe being active in the organized bar not only makes you a better lawyer, it helps your business improve, improves the profession and improves the things the profession is providing to the community," he added. "It's a giving attitude, as opposed to one that is being selfish."

--Editing by Nick Petruncio.