

MIDSIZE HOT LIST



A SPECIAL REPORT

We asked our readers to nominate law firms with between 51 and 150 attorneys that have used their creativity and skill to stay competitive in courtrooms and at deal tables across the U.S. The 20 firms we highlight this week have held their own, often against much larger firms, charting winning courses in high-stakes matters that led to key victories in 2015. Above all, these firms embody lawyering at its essence—working hard to understand and serve their clients’ needs.

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Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell



CAROLYN FAIRLESS

FIRM FACTS:

- **Year founded:** 1998
- **Headquarters:** Denver
- **Total attorneys:** 100
- **Partners:** 41
- **Associates:** 22

It all started with a call at 6 p.m. on a Thursday.

The Telluride Film Festival was to premiere an unauthorized documentary of Aretha Franklin's seminal 1972 gospel performance at Los Angeles' New Temple Missionary Baptist Church the following night. Could Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell secure a temporary restraining order in a matter of hours?

Of counsel Reid Neureiter spent the night of Sept. 3, 2015, reviewing documents from earlier litigation related to the film, which depicts the concert that would become the best-selling gospel record "Amazing Grace."

The film, shot by late, famed director Sydney Pollack, has been shelved for years due to technical problems. The day of the premiere, Neureiter prepped Franklin to testify by phone during a 3 p.m. hearing at the U.S. District Court for Colorado. "The Queen of Soul is a little different from your standard client, there's no question," he said.

He argued in court that showing the film violated Franklin's right of publicity and a federal anti-bootlegging law. Producer Alan Elliott had not secured Franklin's permission as stipulated in Warner Bros.' sale of the original footage to him. A federal judge in Denver agreed and barred the film festival from showing the film.

In 2015, the firm had its hands in other high-stakes matters, successfully defending Michelin North America Inc. against a \$20 million products liability suit over tire tread separation, arguing during a three-week jury trial that chronic underinflation contributed. It also helped Fiat Chrysler Automobiles N.V. defeat a \$50 million breach of contract suit in California state court.

"Whether it's obtaining a TRO on a day's notice, or defending a class or mass action over a decade and seeing it through trial and resolution, our teams do what it takes to deliver uncompromising service and outstanding results for our clients," said managing partner Carolyn Fairless.

—KAREN SLOAN