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NJ Court Greenlights Beasley Allen Attys In Talc Litigation

By [George Woolston](#) · [Listen to article](#)

Law360 (June 20, 2025, 4:16 PM EDT) -- A New Jersey state judge will allow two [Beasley Allen Law Firm](#) attorneys to represent a California couple in their suit accusing [Johnson & Johnson](#) of selling carcinogenic talc-based baby powder and appear pro hac vice despite the company's vehement opposition.

Atlantic County Superior Court Judge John C. Porto on Thursday granted Diana and Gilbert Balderrama's motion for their pro hac vice admission, finding Beasley Allen attorneys Leigh O'Dell and Andy Birchfield are in good standing with the Garden State court despite Johnson & Johnson's [argument](#) that the partners' [conduct](#) in its talc unit's bankruptcy proceedings warrants denial of their application.

Johnson & Johnson had moved to block the attorneys' admission earlier this month over their conduct in the bankruptcy case, asserting that allowing them to represent the Balderramas would "be detrimental to the prompt, fair, and efficient administration of justice."

The Balderramas [argued](#) the company failed to carry its burden to establish a factual basis for barring pro hac vice admission, claiming J&J was asking the court to "allow innuendo" to suffice.

Richard M. Golomb, counsel for the couple, called for the end of J&J's opposition to their attorneys' participation in the case in a statement Friday.

"In our civil justice system, defendants do not get to select their adversaries. It's time for these tactics of retribution against Beasley Allen to stop. Trials need to be scheduled without any additional sideshows or distractions. Their three bankruptcies have failed as have their attempts to disqualify their fiercest adversaries," Golomb said.

However, J&J has different plans, according to Erik Haas, the company's worldwide vice president of litigation.

"We respectfully disagree with yesterday's decision regarding the Beasley Allen firm. Beasley Allen's conduct evidences a pattern and practice of willfully and wantonly breaching its ethical duties," Haas said in a statement Friday. "We look forward to the Appellate Division's decision on this matter."

J&J initially attempted to [disqualify](#) Beasley Allen from the multicounty litigation in December 2023 over the firm's relationship with James Conlan, a former J&J attorney with knowledge of its talc litigation and bankruptcy strategy, who has since retired from practicing law and now operates a business advisory, acquisition and management firm.

Judge Porto [rejected](#) its bid last July, ruling that the "appearance of impropriety" standard no longer applies in attorney disqualification determinations and in the absence of a smoking gun showing the former [Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP](#) attorney shared confidential information with Beasley Allen, it could not force the firm out.

J&J argued that since the July 2024 ruling, Birchfield and Beasley Allen certified that more than 11,000 clients had given informed consent to vote against J&J's over \$10 billion prepackaged reorganization plan in its talc unit's third [bankruptcy proceeding](#) held earlier this year.

But the bankruptcy court found that the firm had only received 3,000 affirmative responses and ruled that all these votes were invalid, the company argued.

The Balderramas are represented by Richard M. Golomb.

The J&J defendants are represented by Jessica L. Brennan of [Barnes & Thornburg LLP](#).

The case is Diana Balderrama v. Johnson & Johnson et al., case number L-6540-14, in the [Superior Court of New Jersey](#), County of Atlantic.

--Additional reporting by Ryan Harroff and Emily Sawicki. Editing by Drashti Mehta.

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Leigh O'Dell

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