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Butler Wooten & Peak Splits Into Three New Firms

Butler, Wooten & Peak is now Butler Prather. Also Peak Wooten McDaniel & Colwell. And Cannella Snyder.

By Katheryn Hayes Tucker | December 15, 2021



(Photo: Shutterstock)

One of the biggest and most successful plaintiffs firms in the Southeast is breaking up.

Butler, Wooten & Peak are no longer together. Three new firms have sprung up from the split.

Founder Jim Butler and partner Ramsey Prather said the firm, formerly called Butler Wooten & Peak, is now Butler Prather. Butler Prather will continue practicing in the same offices in Atlanta, Columbus and Savannah.

Brandon Peak and Joel Wooten said they have formed a new firm with partners Chris McDaniel and Joseph Colwell. Their new firm is called Peak Wooten McDaniel & Colwell. They have an office in Columbus and will likely open one in Atlanta. They intend to practice statewide, Peak said.

Former Butler Wooten & Peak Managing Partner Tedra Cannella said she has formed a new firm, called Cannella Snyder, with former BWP partner Rob Snyder and former BWP associate Rory Weeks.

"The good news is everyone seems happy with the changes—certainly we are," Butler said in a written statement with Prather.

"We wish those who departed the very best," Prather said. "They are excellent lawyers and will do well."



James Butler (left) and Ramsey Prather.
(Courtesy photos)

Butler and Prather said two associates remain with the firm and former associate Michael Williford has "come home."

Also remaining with Butler Prather are: four of BWP's five paralegals, the chief operating officer, the business manager, both investigators, two of three legal assistants and the client intake specialist.

"All of our longtime staff are staying with one exception—these are people who have been with us for 33, 29, 27, 27, 21 and 11 years, plus our COO and business manager," Butler said. "These folks empower this firm."

While Butler Prather said it will continue to handle all types of civil cases, its primary focus is on representing plaintiffs in cases involving tractor-trailer wrecks, False Claims Act (whistleblower) matters, business torts and products liability. It is preparing to try multiple cases in

2022.

It also will continue to represent select corporate clients, which the firm has done for decades, based on long-standing personal relationships. In 2020, Butler and Prather led a team defending Synovus Bank against seven class-action lawsuits filed in federal courts in four states arising out of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which Congress enacted in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. All seven of those lawsuits against Synovus were dismissed. Butler Prather also will continue working on several cases with some of the lawyers who recently left BWP.

Butler and his partners have been behind some of the biggest verdicts in Georgia history. In recent years, Butler—working with his son Jeb Butler of the Butler Firm—won a \$150 million verdict (<https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/almID/1202723209981/jury-adds-30m-to-verdict-after-plaintiffs-lawyer-marks-boys-last-60-seconds-video/>) against Chrysler in 2015 for the death of 4-year-old Remi Walden, killed when a Jeep gas tank exploded. The judge (<https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/almID>

/1202726593682/judge-who-presided-over-trial-with-150m-verdict-is-a-fan-of-open-courtrooms/) reduced (https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/almID/1202733309338/judge-slashes-jeep-verdict-from-150m-to-40m/)the award to \$40 million. The company ultimately paid (https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/2018/04/17/chrysler-pays-40m-jeep-judgment/) \$47 million with interest after exhausting its appeals.



Joel Wooten (from left), Brandon Peak, Joseph Colwell and Chris McDaniel of the new firm Peak Wooten McDaniel & Colwell. (Courtesy photo)

Peak (https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/2019/08/28/brandon-peak-the-story-of-the-lawyer-who-won-a-280m-verdict/) and Wooten worked together on the 2019 wrongful death commercial trucking case that ended with a \$280 million verdict (https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/2019/08/24/how-a-columbus-ga-jury-returned-a-280m-verdict-in-45-minutes/) in Muscogee County State Court.

“It is a real honor to wake up each day and have the privilege of doing important work for deserving clients alongside smart lawyers and wonderful staff,” Peak said in a written statement. “Joel Wooten is one of the most well-regarded lawyers and leaders in the state, and I am thankful he has chosen to continue practicing law at PWMC while also serving our state as chairman of the Georgia Ports Authority. Chris McDaniel and Joseph Colwell are both rising stars in the legal profession with impeccable judgment, strong work ethics and extremely bright futures. We are thankful for our time at Butler Wooten & Peak and wish all our former colleagues well,

but are excited about building our own firm and taking our practices to the next level.”

Wooten emphasized the importance of lawyer referrals.

“We enjoy collaborating with other lawyers on significant cases where we can add value and increase the client’s bottom line,” Wooten said. “We consider it a great honor when a referring lawyer or former client calls us with a new case, because it shows their trust in our abilities and confidence that we will treat them right. We are committed to operating our firm by the Golden Rule and treating others as we would want to be treated. I am proud of the firm that Jim and I built over the years but equally excited to continue practicing law with bright lawyers committed to obtaining full justice for clients in need.”

Peak and Wooten said their new firm will continue handling all types of personal injury cases, plus whistleblowers claims. They also plan to continue to represent select corporate clients in other types of civil litigation. “People think we only do personal injury work, which is no doubt a significant part of our practice, but we’ve also been helping businesses, business leaders, and friends handle select matters with discretion for a long time,” Wooten said.



The new Cannella Snyder firm is located in Decatur and will focus on the same kind of work the partners have long practiced: catastrophic personal injury and wrongful death, trucking, product liability and False Claims Act cases, Cannella and Snyder said. They attended the University of Georgia School of Law together and have been friends since. Cannella had practiced at Butler Wooten since she finished a clerkship



Rory A. Weeks (from left), Tedra L. Cannella, and Robert H. Snyder, Jr. of Canella Snyder. (Courtesy photos)

and I are no exception.”

“I practiced law with Jim Butler for 13 years and learned a tremendous amount from him and all the other outstanding lawyers who have come through those doors,” Cannella said. “But I could not be any more excited about the next chapter.”

with U.S. District Court Judge Hugh Lawson in 2008. Before joining Butler Wooten, Snyder clerked for District Court Judge Harold Murphy and worked at Rogers and Hardin and Schreeder Wheeler & Flint.

Weeks will be developing an appellate practice at the firm.

“I have tremendous respect for the lawyers at Butler Wooten & Peak,” Snyder said. “But I think most plaintiffs lawyers are entrepreneurs at heart—and Tedra, Rory

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