

Bancroft: Ready for more

June 18, 2012

Washington is awash with speculation and anticipation over the pending U.S. Supreme Court decisions on health care reform and immigration.

You might think that the offices of Bancroft at 19th and M streets N.W. would be the focus of that anxiety. That's the professional home of former Solicitor General Paul Clement, who argued in both cases and a passel of other hot-button disputes during the last year.

But Viet Dinh, the firm's founder, said no. "We're way too busy to be guessing. We get one case argued, we start preparing for the next one."

Dinh has also been busy building the firm. Bancroft has doubled in size since Clement arrived in April 2011. Clement quit King & Spalding in a highly public dispute over the firm's decision to withdraw from representing House members in defense of the Defense of Marriage Act. "We went on hypersteroids when Paul arrived," Dinh said. The firm now boasts 15 lawyers, 14 of whom were federal appeals court clerks. Six clerked at the Supreme Court. Dinh launched the firm in 2004 from his home on Bancroft Place in Washington; hence the name.

Countering the all-conservative image of the firm, Dinh points to one recent hire: associate Kelsi Brown Corkran, who came from the Obama Justice Department. She'll clerk for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg next year.

The firm has also taken on unexpected clients, including a class of California prisoners and victims of prosecutorial abuse. Dinh said his time at the Justice Department, along with Clement's and partner H. Christopher Bartolomucci's, have left them "impatient with prosecutorial misconduct."

But the core of the firm's appellate practice has been Clement, who argues without notes and has been praised as the premier Supreme Court advocate of his time. He argued seven cases during the current term — more, if you count the health care cases as more than one — breaking the modern-day record for private practitioners.

June 4 was an especially good day for Bancroft. Clement won in *Armour v. Indianapolis*, a tax case he argued on behalf of the city. Justices had roughed him up at oral argument, but he won, 6-3. And in *Reichle v. Howards*, also issued that day, the Court gave qualified immunity to Secret Service agents represented in part by a Bancroft team led by Bartolomucci.

As busy as the firm has been, Dinh said it is ready for more. "We are getting a lot of calls" from potential clients and from lawyers seeking to join the firm. "We're glad to get both." — *Tony Mauro*