

New Jersey Powerhouse: Chiesa Shahinian

By Jack Karp

Law360 (September 3, 2025, 4:00 PM EDT) -- Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC is helping Hollywood heavyweights Netflix and Lionsgate expand in New Jersey, the state manage Atlantic City's financial recovery and one of the biggest high-rise developments in state history navigate the current immigration landscape.

Those projects and CSG's growth from a 90-person firm into one that will have 211 lawyers as of September, according to CSG Executive Committee Co-Chair Frank J. Giantomasi, are what earned the firm a spot on Law360's Regional Powerhouses for 2025.

At CSG, which was founded in the Garden State about a decade ago as the successor to Wolff & Samson, litigation and real estate are two of the most central practice areas for its attorneys, the vast majority of whom work in New Jersey, though the firm has a New York office as well.

But the firm practices in "every significant area that requires attention" for its clients, according to Jeffrey S. Chiesa, also co-chair of the firm's executive committee. The firm, for instance, has built up its white collar group substantially, become more nuanced in the tax area, and started a matrimonial practice.

"We really use as our guiding light the business community of New Jersey and New York. Whether they're corporate or self-made entrepreneurial businesses, we try to address what their needs are," Giantomasi said.

Increasingly, those businesses are Hollywood heavy-hitters, according to these attorneys.

The firm serves as lead counsel for Netflix on its current billion-dollar effort to build a 500,000-square-foot film studio on the former Fort Monmouth U.S. Army base. CSG negotiated the purchase and redevelopment agreements for the project, which broke ground in May.

CSG is also helping Lionsgate develop its new studio complex in Newark and represents Matrix Development Group in its effort to build a film studio in West Orange, near where Thomas Edison built the first motion picture studio in 1893.



"We have an excellent redevelopment team, so we can handle the land use. We have an excellent transactional team. We have one of the largest commercial real estate groups in the state and perhaps in the tri-state area," Giantomasi said about why Hollywood has been knocking on the firm's door. "So the expertise was here."

Focusing on a different kind of entertainment industry, the firm is also playing a starring role helping the state's beach and casino mecca, Atlantic City, get back on its fiscal feet, according to Chiesa.

The firm serves as counsel for New Jersey in its financial management of the city, including successfully defending the constitutionality and application of the Municipal Stabilization and Recovery Act, which allows New Jersey to step in and help municipalities facing financial crises, something the state did with Atlantic City in 2016.

In June, CSG member and general counsel Ronald L. Israel won an appellate division decision dismissing the Atlantic City police union's challenge to the MSRA. The firm has also helped establish and manage a unique method of taxation for casino properties, negotiate the resolution of outstanding casino tax appeals, and implement legislation intended to help casinos recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This is all designed to create some fiscal responsibility in Atlantic City," Chiesa said.

CSG has also had several wins in the criminal defense practice area, according to managing member Marie L. Mathews.

In February, the firm convinced a Mercer County Superior Court judge to dismiss racketeering and other charges against Brown & Connery LLP partner William Tambussi, one of several defendants in a case over allegations that New Jersey power broker George E. Norcross III and his co-defendants used their influence to benefit from legislation to make it easier for projects in Camden to receive tax credits.

CSG member Lee Vartan similarly won dismissal in August 2024 of a yearslong case against a prominent Lakewood rabbi accused of money laundering and misconduct relating to a charitable organization he ran.

"It was really big, big news in the state and shows the commitment that our lawyers put forward for all of our clients, including the rabbi, who had been prosecuted by the state with really no evidence," Mathews said. "They did a fabulous job."

CSG is also becoming a go-to firm for corporate immigration matters and is currently helping one of the largest residential and commercial high-rise developments in the state's history — One Journal Square in Jersey City — with immigration compliance and EB-5 capital-raising efforts.

"We're probably one of the leading firms in the country in EB-5 foreign investment into New Jersey and New York," Giantomasi said. But the current political environment surrounding immigration, where Giantomasi says "the changes are weekly," has required the firm to be flexible.

That includes helping to sort out the government's denial of visas to a Venezuelan little league team that planned to play in the Little League World Series in South Carolina, according to Giantomasi.

That visa denial could foreshadow issues with the 2026 World Cup, the final of which is slated to be played in New Jersey, according to Giantomasi, who said the firm works with the World Cup host

committee and pointed out that many of the World Cup teams come from South American countries that have been at the center of the Trump administration's immigration policies.

"We're looking at are they going to change the venues to Mexico or to Canada, or are we going to work on getting in players through the visa program," Giantomasi said.

Shifting landscapes won't just be confined to the corporate immigration area, but will impact the New Jersey legal industry as a whole in the coming years as the adoption of artificial intelligence speeds up, according to these attorneys.

"We're definitely focused on making sure that we don't get left behind because it's so fast-moving," Mathews said.

So the firm has formed a strategic committee to look at all the available AI technology and is trying out different products, she said.

"We want to make sure that we're staying on top of the business model as well because it's scary how AI could potentially change the market," Mathews added. "So we just want to make sure that we're on top of those things."

--Editing by Nick Petruncio.