

Founding Partner Mathew Tully discusses his return to firm with the Troy Record

Albany lawyer returns from service overseas

By Molly Eadie

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ALBANY >> After retiring from a nearly two-decade long military career and a two-year leave to serve as a lieutenant colonel in Afghanistan, Mathew B. Tully has returned to his multimillion-dollar, Albany-based law firm, Tully Rinckey PLLC. Tully was medically retired from the army May 5 after a long recovery from injuries sustained during a suicide bomber attack. No U.S. service members were killed in the Aug. 7, 2012, attack in Logar Province, Afghanistan, when a suicide bomber used a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VPIED) to attempt to kill Tully and others from his unit. Tully was later awarded the Purple Heart by President Barack Obama. Tully, who comes from a long line of military service members, said he always knew he wanted to serve. "I knew I was going to join the military when I was a little kid. I loved the military growing up," he said. He attended Hofstra University for journalism, and there he began his service in the college's Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC) program in 1991. When he graduated in 1995, he planned on joining the National Guard or Army Reserves and beginning a full-time job in New York City as a federal law enforcement officer. It was only about a month later, though, that he was ordered on active duty, and told he wouldn't have a job upon his return. "I started doing research on whether or not they could do that, and realized they couldn't, and that's when I started my interest in law," he said. Tully sued his employer — the federal government — twice, once for failing to honor military leave, and again for creating a hostile work environment. He represented himself, won and used some of that money to pay for law school. "I couldn't find a lawyer to take my case," he said. "That was kind of the start of Tully Rinckey PLLC." Tully met Greg T. Rinckey, now managing partner of the firm, in the ROTC program. Rinckey also served on active duty from 1998 until 2004. Tully's legal career has since been largely dedicated to the employment rights of service members through the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, which protects civilian job rights and benefits for veterans and members of the military. He said when the firm began, most employers weren't familiar with the laws protecting service members' employment, and he was one of the few attorneys in the country who specializes in that aspect of law. "That's where we've made our millions," Tully said. "People were drawn to me." Since then Tully said he's taken that money and reinvested it in the company, which is now a full-service law firm and has six offices in New York state (Albany, Buffalo, Binghamton, Syracuse, Utica and Rochester), as well as offices in Washington, D.C., Virginia and another opening in California in September. The firm was named the sixth fastest-growing company in

the Capital Region in April, and the firm's revenues grew 49.1 percent in 2013 while Tully was on active duty. He says he expected the firm would grow but didn't realize it would grow so much. While Tully was away, Rinckey handled the firm's day-to-day operations. "Where it was really rough, though, was the homefront," Tully said. Shortly after he was ordered on active duty, he and his wife learned they were expecting their third child, Annamae, born Aug. 27, 2012, while Tully was overseas. At the time, his other children were 5- and 2 years old. "It was tough on the law firm, but it was tougher on the house," he said. Tully says he runs his firm based on military styles of leadership, and prefers to hire veterans and military spouses. Now he plans to continue expanding the firm, with three new offices in California, Utica and Binghamton opening soon, and anticipates opening a New York City office next year. He's also looking to reconnect with clients who have transferred to other attorneys in the firm and build relationships with the client base in Troy, Albany and Schenectady. "This is a great place to open up and do business," said Tully, pointing to the recent revitalization of downtown Troy. "The economics of this area are very beneficial."