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Duquesne Univ. Alum Tom Kline Donates \$50M To Law School

By **Matthew Santoni**

Law360 (September 7, 2022, 3:04 PM EDT) -- Duquesne University in Pittsburgh will rename its law school for Kline & Specter partner Thomas R. Kline, after the attorney made a record \$50 million donation to his alma mater, the school announced Wednesday.

Kline, a Hazleton, Pennsylvania, native who graduated from Duquesne's School of Law in 1978 and had previously donated \$7.5 million to the university in 2017 to establish a continuing education program for judges, hailed the gift as a chance to give back to his adopted "home."

"It's hard to imagine a more appropriate name to affix to this storied law school," university President Ken Gormley said at an event announcing the donation Wednesday. "Tom Kline has devoted his entire career and all the talents at his command to the service of others, particularly those most in need, so the system of law and justice will work fairly for them."

The donation was the largest in Duquesne's 144-year history, the university announced, eclipsing the previous record Kline had set when he established the Thomas R. Kline Center for Judicial Education five years ago.

The high-profile, Philadelphia-based litigator, whose achievements included a \$70 million verdict against Johnson & Johnson over side effects of Risperdal and representing victims of clergy abuse within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, kicked off a speech about his donation by remembering his unsuccessful appeal to the law school's then-dean after he barely missed making it onto law review.

"I didn't win that battle, but I guess I won the war," Kline quipped.

He emphasized that judges, justices, attorneys and law students all had a role to play in protecting peoples' rights and protecting democracy.

In addition to Gormley, who lauded Kline as "one of the great trial lawyers of all time," Kline was praised by his firm's co-founder Shanin Specter for his commitment to education, starting as a sixth-grade teacher in his pre-law days up to his work teaching judges, attorneys and law students.

Law school Dean April Barton said Kline gave the school wide latitude in how to use the

donation, so it would be split among scholarships for law students, grants for faculty, new legal clinic offerings to help the community, enhancing the university's bar exam preparatory program, and unspecified building and facilities improvements.

Duquesne will have Pennsylvania's second Thomas R. Kline School of Law, after Kline had made another \$50 million donation to Philadelphia's Drexel University in 2014 to have that school named after him as well. Though Gormley said the two Kline schools would remain independent, Barton said they would also seek ways in which they could collaborate from either end of the Keystone State.

--Editing by Patrick Reagan.