

2020

WASHINGTON D.C.

TRAILBLAZERS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE NATIONAL
LAW JOURNAL

JAMES MURRAY
BLANK ROME



PIONEER SPIRIT In sexual abuse scandals, James Murray's clients are the institutions that employed the abusers. But ultimately, Murray works for the victims. Murray negotiates with the institutions' insurance carriers to obtain the largest possible settlements to compensate victims for their injuries — a function he has performed in cases involving sexual abuse by priests in 18 Catholic dioceses and physicians affiliated with at least two hospitals. Often, insurance settlements stemming from institutional liability are the only source for victim compensation. So Murray often works directly with plaintiffs' lawyers "because it's in everybody's interest to get as much insurance money as we can."

TRAILS BLAZED Murray began pursuing insurance settlements early in his career when he helped Boeing recover more than \$150 million in damages from its insurance company for the cost of cleaning up Superfund sites it used. His handling of that case led the Archdiocese of Seattle to engage him after an abuse scandal in 2003. He has since recovered more than \$500 million for victims of sexual abuse. Along with the church entities, Murray represented a Delaware hospital that faced financial ruin over a pediatrician's abuse of hundreds of babies and toddlers. After a year and a half of mediation, he secured insurance settlements to cover most of the \$123 million paid to victims.

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS The Delaware case — "the absolute worst," in Murray's view — was the first class action involving sexual abuse, but hardly the last. More states are revising their statutes of limitations to allow adults who were victimized as children to sue their abusers and the institutions that employed them. Murray expects a flood of cases to follow. "It's a depressing topic." But "for the first time in the history of the world, the spotlight is really on it. That's one positive thing."