

Venice celebrates Politeama-US law firm merger

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VENICE — Guests filled Palazzo Donà dalle Rose in Venice over the weekend to celebrate the merger of Italy's Politeama law firm with the Washington practice of American lawyer Mark Bailen, in the year the United States marks 250 years of independence.

The alliance unites the two firms' Italian and American clients in a single transatlantic practice, built around high-value real estate, fine art, free speech, free trade, media, and intellectual property. Bailen focuses on business and commercial disputes, media and First Amendment matters, and intellectual property.

Politeama's team, including founder Countess Chiara Modìca Donà dalle Rose, an international lawyer, advises on acquisitions and sales of high-value real estate and fine art in Italy and elsewhere in Europe.

"This type of firm will offer full seamless service and integration of the matters, combining the knowledge and expertise of legal teams on both sides of the Atlantic," said international attorney Joseph Gulino, who has more than two decades of experience advising institutional investors in matters across the world, with a particular focus on cross-border litigation and arbitration. "It's not unusual, and in fact I think it's becoming more common, more relevant and even more necessary."

The tie reflects a broader wave of consolidation in the legal sector. Fairfax Associates, a consultancy that tracks the industry, recorded 59 completed law firm mergers in 2025, up from 50 in 2024, and said cross-border activity was trending upward into 2026 as law-firm combinations grew increasingly common across the United States, Europe, and beyond.

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“The full service that can be provided by this type of firm, or even looser alliances between firms in Italy and the United States, maximizes the representation of the client and the availability of resources,” Gulino added.

The ceremony unfolded before a 19th century painting of the American flag that hangs in the palace. The hosts, Donà dalle Rose and her husband, Count Francesco Donà dalle Rose, a philanthropist and cultural promoter, welcomed entrepreneurs and clients of both firms.

“When you split a cross-border matter between two national firms, the client ends up as the messenger between them, and things fall through the cracks in the gap,” international lawyer Marco Permunian. “One practice on both sides means one team stays accountable from the first question to the last signature.”

The value is that nobody gets handed off across the ocean, he told Italy Now.

The evening doubled as the launch of the BIAS Biennial of Sacred Arts – Isola d’Arte’s call for artists, also run by the foundation. Guests included the Consul of Armenia, Jeronimo Nsue of Equatorial Guinea’s culture ministry, and Tilman Fertitta, US ambassador to Italy.

“Art and music can break down any wall,” Donà dalle Rose told Italy Now, “especially the wall of prejudice and cultural oppression.”

Doge descendants

The couple descend from the family of Venetian *dogi*, the elected rulers of the Republic of Venice. Their ancestors helped finance the city’s foundations, the Doge’s Palace, the Church of San Giorgio, and the telescopes used by Galileo Galilei.

The evening honoured the 250th anniversary of American independence and what the hosts described as the quiet work of lawyers in defending human rights, free speech, and free trade.

Those present also attended the Mediterranean Melody Song of Serenissima master class, a program Donà dalle Rose set up last year with the objective of bringing together children from Palestine, Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, Morocco, Kosovo, Albania, Turkey, Armenia, Egypt, Spain, Italy, and the United States.

Numerous entrepreneurs and public and private bodies are supporting the project, according to the foundation. For the hosts, the evening bound the work of the courtroom to a plainer hope, that shared culture might outlast the divisions law is so often left to settle.

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