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THE 2026 DEALMAKERS
OF THE YEAR



JEFFREY D. SAFERSTEIN AND DAVID J. COHEN
WEIL, GOTSHAL & MANGES

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By Ryan Harroff

Overcoming a rapid timetable and literal lives on the line, Weil, Gotshal & Manges was able to coordinate the largest health care bankruptcy in American history for Steward Health Care, which entered Chapter 11 in 2024 with \$9.2 billion in liabilities and more than 30 hospitals.

Weil partners Jeffrey Saferstein and David Cohen were able to get Steward's bankruptcy plan approved on July 25, 2025 after securing around \$390 million in financing for the deal and managing to keep 28 of the hospitals under the company's umbrella open and operating. That financing had to come quickly after the bankruptcy began on May 6, 2024, otherwise patients would have been forced to move or go without care, Saferstein and Cohen said in an interview.

The global settlement and confirmation plan that Weil secured for Steward resolved \$7.6 billion in liabilities—broken down as \$1 billion in debt and \$6.6 billion in lease claims) and facilitated the sale of the 28 continuing hospitals across 12 total transactions.

Saferstein, who is a current co-chair of Weil's restructuring department, said that the speed with which he and his fellow restructuring partner Cohen needed to get Steward and its numerous creditors on the same page was motivated both by the need to keep the hospitals open and, as in every case, to avoid letting legal fees "eat up" the creditors' recovery.

While a litany of other firms worked across from Weil, Saferstein and Cohen said that they mostly worked with Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld and Milbank, who represented the unsecured creditors' committee and Steward's "super lenders."

Cohen said that the sale of Steward's assets was uniquely complicated to organize, however, given the way that its business was structured. The company had a landlord called Medical Properties Trust which owned the land that the hospitals stood on, but Steward itself owned the equipment and operations inside.

"When you go to sell a hospital and one party owns the land of the building and another party owns everything inside the building, how do you allocate that?" Cohen said. "How do you get everybody to agree? The landlord obviously wanted all the proceeds to go to them, and the company and its lenders and the creditor's committee wanted all the money to come to the estate."

Medical Properties Trust was actually one of the parties who provided the \$390 million in total financing that let most of Steward's hospitals around Massachusetts and Pennsylvania remain open, Saferstein and Cohen said, with the rest coming from the states themselves and some first-in, last-out lending firms.

Ultimately, the court approved Steward's plan after some unorthodox argumentation by Cohen, Saferstein and the over 100 other attorneys at Weil that the two said worked on the matter. Part of that unorthodox approach involved arguing to the court that the potential for civil litigation against, among other insiders, Steward's former chief executive officer would allow for up to \$4 billion in additional creditor recovery once the plan was approved.

"I think the most innovative thing that we came up with was, 'how do we use the future litigation proceeds as part of our plan to pay people back?'" Saferstein said. "It hasn't been done all that often, but there are significant litigation claims here. There are billions of dollars, we believe, of claims that are out there that will be able to come in and pay creditors back."