

Sheppard Mullin Takes In 10 McKenna Attys In Calif.

By **Andrew Strickler**

Law360, New York (April 07, 2014, 6:10 PM ET) -- Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP has pulled in 10 partners from McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP in California, the firms announced Monday, including an insurance group representing a significant portion of McKenna's San Diego office.

The insurance litigation team includes partners Peter H. Klee, Ronald D. Getchey, Charles A. Danaher, John T. Brooks, Nathan S. Arrington, R. Randal Crispen and Marc J. Feldman. Another McKenna insurance partner and litigator, Theona Zhordania, has joined Sheppard Mullin in Los Angeles.

The incoming insurance team "is remarkable in so many ways: The partners have worked together for most of or their entire careers, they are strong from top to bottom, and they are renowned in their arena," Sheppard Mullin Chairman Guy Halgren said in a statement. "It's like gaining in one fell swoop the eight position players on a World Series team."

In addition, partners Nancy T. Scull and David M. Hymer have made the jump from McKenna's San Diego office to Sheppard Mullin's real estate, land use and environmental practice group in the city.

McKenna said Monday it is committed to the San Diego office and continues to grow in the state.

"The departures reflect a small percent shift in the number of McKenna's attorneys in our San Diego region," the firm said in a statement. "We continue to have strong marketplace history and diverse strengths in litigation, government contracts, government affairs, real estate, private client services and corporate law."

Sheppard Mullin said an unspecified number of McKenna associates are also joining the incoming partners. The losses leave McKenna with 30 partners in San Diego, according to a roster.

Sheppard Mullin has 90 attorneys its San Diego offices and 220 attorneys in its Los Angeles offices.

Klee's practice focuses on insurance defense on individual actions and class actions for bad faith, fraud, unfair competition and other torts. His clients include most major insurance carriers doing business in California, including Allstate, State Farm, Fireman's Fund, MetLife, Infinity, St. Paul-Travelers, and the Automobile Club of Southern California, the firm said.

Getchey's practice also focuses on California, but he has or is representing insurance company clients in bad faith cases pending in more than a dozen states, often for cases involving "institutional bad faith"

allegations.

“We know many Sheppard Mullin attorneys, including a handful we have previously practiced with, and are thrilled to be joining the firm,” Klee said. “I am also excited to continue practicing with the group and look forward to growing the practice further with [Frank Falzetta, head of Sheppard Mullin's insurance practice].”

The firm's real estate, land use and environmental practice group leader, Domenic Drago, called Scull the leading experts in California in mixed-use developments, residential developments and Bureau of Real Estate regulatory matters, while Hymer focuses on property purchase and sale, leasing and construction contracts.

Scull and Hymer have spent their entire careers at McKenna and the legacy Luce Forward Hamilton & Scripps LLP.

The Luce firm, once one of the state's largest, was absorbed into McKenna in early 2012, triggering the departures of at least 10 Luce partners, including Pat Swan, Luce's former San Diego headquarter office managing partner, who went to Jones Day.

McKenna is primarily the result of the 2002 tie-up of Washington-based McKenna & Cuneo and Atlanta's Long Aldridge & Norman.

Last November, a planned merger between Dentons and McKenna Long fell apart midvote as a group of McKenna partners with heavy equity weight blocked the deal.

The highly unusual move came after the international Dentons partnership voted nearly unanimously to absorb the Atlanta-based McKenna, and despite the support of Chairman Jeffrey Haidet and a majority of McKenna partners.

--Editing by Andrew Park.