

Employment Team Reunites To Launch D.C. Practice

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Thursday, Sep 06, 2007 — A team of employment attorneys who had previously practiced together at Morgan Lewis & Bockius before going their separate ways has reunited to jumpstart Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP's employment practice in its Washington, D.C. office.

The California-based firm announced that Jonathan G. Rose, Sheldon M. Kline and Thomas K. Wotring joined the firm's labor and employment practice group this week as partners, and will be the firm's first Washington, D.C.-based employment lawyers.

The attorneys had practiced together in the late 1990s at Morgan Lewis, where Wotring chaired the employee benefits and executive compensation practice.

In 2000, Wotring decided to retire from private practice. Three years later, Rose joined Katten Muchin in D.C., while Kline went to Thelen Reid in 2004, also in Washington D.C. Then in 2005, Kline helped coax Wotring out of retirement to join Thelen Reid as well, convincing that he could "still have fun practicing law."

Jennifer LaMacchia, an associate who practiced with Kline and Wotring at Thelen Reid, also joined Sheppard Mullin's employment group this week.

"When the opportunity arose to work together again, it was not a terribly difficult decision," said Rose. "Sheppard Mullin offers excellent synergies with our practices."

"I look forward to expanding the firm's East Coast employment practice," Kline said. "This is a premier law firm offering an outstanding opportunity. I am optimistic in building a practice in areas the firm has previously not been able to assist in."

Sheppard Mullin's Washington, D.C. office, which was opened in 2003, now includes 35 attorneys.

"The arrival of this team marks another significant step in deepening the firm's regulatory and labor expertise on the East Coast," said Guy Halgren, chairman of Sheppard Mullin. "Our clients will benefit from their experience and backgrounds in private practice, in-house and government work. The group's formidable ERISA and employment knowledge complement our employee benefit and labor practices." Kline said the team had a strong client base, particularly in the transportation sector, which should allow it to grow Sheppard Mullin's employment practice on the East Coast.

"I think in five years, we'll have a significant foothold in this market," Kline said. "Sheppard will, in five years, be a household name in the labor and employment sector of the marketplace."

Rose's practice is focused on representing plan sponsors and fiduciaries involved in Employee Retirement Income Security Act litigation, including class action cases involving stock drops and arbitration disputes.

Prior to entering private practice, Rose served as an attorney for the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp., where he learned about ERISA issues related to bankruptcy liquidations and reorganizations, and Department of Labor and Internal Revenue Service policy and enforcement matters.

Kline has represented international and domestic airlines, trucking companies, maritime companies and ports in labor negotiations, litigation and before administrative agencies such as the National Labor Relations Board and the National Mediation Board.

He was special labor counsel for Aloha Airlines Inc. in its recent bankruptcy, during which he was responsible for terminating the carrier's defined benefit pension plans and negotiating a final settlement of all claims with the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp.

Kline has served for eight years at the U.S. Department of Labor and nine years at the National Mediation Board, where he mediated a number of collective bargaining disputes, including those involving pilots, flight attendants and mechanics at major domestic airlines. He was also involved in the government's legislative efforts to deregulate the railroad and airline industries.

Wotring has extensive experience with single and multi-employer collective bargaining agreements, particularly in the trucking, automobile transport, maritime and air freight industries.

Wotring also represents employee benefit plans regarding all areas of benefit collective bargaining and benefit plan operations. In addition to bargaining with union representatives, his practice on behalf of employers includes ERISA compliance, litigation of federal claims, and representation before the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice.

"We are excited to have Jonathan, Sheldon and Tom onboard," said Ed Schiff, managing partner of the firm's Washington, D.C. office. "Their respective practices are an excellent fit for the D.C. office, which has a strong regulatory and transactional focus. Jonathan's investment fund clients and Sheldon's airline industry work dovetail well with the firm's existing matters and representations."

Sheppard Mullin has 490 attorneys in 10 offices located throughout California and in New York, Washington, D.C. and Shanghai. In the U.S., the firm's clients include more than half of the Fortune 100 companies.