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alumni news

SheppardMullin

WINTER 2019

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STATS AND FACTS

880

Lawyers Globally

15 Offices in
5 Countries

10 Practice Groups

30 Industry Teams

31 Blogs

1,545
Alumni in our network

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Sheppard Mullin Honored with MCCA Sager Diversity Award

We are proud to report that Sheppard Mullin is the recipient of the 2019 Thomas L. Sager Award given by the Minority Corporate Counsel Association (MCCA); we were one of only three law firm finalists. I had the honor of accepting the award on behalf of the firm on October 16, 2019 at the MCCA Diversity Gala in New York City. Once we were selected as a finalist, the MCCA produced a [video](#) about us (featuring Washington, D.C. partner Fatema Merchant and New York associate Shin Hahn), which focused on a new program the MCCA found compelling: our bilingual/bicultural associate development program.

The Sager Award is presented to an AmLaw 200 firm that champions a more diverse and inclusive workforce and has demonstrated a sustained commitment to improving the hiring, retention and promotion of diverse attorneys. The award was first presented in 1999 and is named after former DuPont Senior Vice-President and General Counsel Thomas L. Sager, a widely respected leader in diversity and inclusion efforts.

We work hard at Sheppard Mullin to ensure that Diversity & Inclusion remains a core value and central focus of the firm, so it is very gratifying to have our work and accomplishments recognized. Much of the credit for winning this award goes to our D&I leadership over the last 20 years: Los Angeles partner Dianne Smith and Carol Ross-Burnett, and now New York partner Rena Andoh and Lois Durant.

We are pleased to share this news with our alumni, many of whom paved the way in the area of diversity and inclusion. We wish you and your loved ones a very joyous holiday season and Happy New Year.



Guy Halgren

Chair

ghalgren@sheppardmullin.com

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: AARON GEORGE



Aaron George

Charter Communications

Formerly Business Trials Group,
2013-2018

We are delighted to profile former Sheppard Mullin partner Aaron George, who is now Vice President and Assistant General Counsel of Charter Communications in Washington, D.C.

Career Path

Aaron attended Emory University, obtaining his degree in Psychology in 2001. After college, he worked as a Senior Analyst for MGT of America, and was the primary analyst on statewide, longitudinal evaluations of preschool special education programs and implementations of federal reading grants.

He was pursuing a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavioral Studies (the intersection of psychology and sociology applied to workplace settings) at Tulane University, but since his twin brother and wife were completing law school, decided to move in that direction as well. He obtained his law degree from Vanderbilt University Law School in 2008, and was a Judicial Clerk to the Honorable Anne Conway of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

Aaron then worked as an associate at Hogan Lovells from 2009-2013. He moved to Sheppard Mullin in 2013, making partner in the Business Trials Group in 2018, focused on communications law. He joined Charter Communications in his current position in November 2018.

Current Roles and Responsibilities

Charter Communications is a Stamford, Connecticut headquartered telecommunications and mass media company that offers services to consumers and businesses under the Spectrum brand. The company provides services to more than 26 million customers in 41 states, and it is the second-largest cable operator in the U.S. by subscribers, and third largest pay TV operator behind Comcast and AT&T.

As Vice President and Assistant General Counsel, Aaron advises Charter's field operations and government affairs teams on matters related to government regulation and infrastructure deployment, with a principal focus on Charter's access to and use of public rights-of-way and private easements to construct and operate its cable and broadband network.

He offers strategic guidance relating to business initiatives, federal and state legislative and regulatory advocacy, negotiation of local franchises across the country, and litigation involving access rights and government regulation, as well as risk assessment and compliance advice.

Importance of Outside Counsel

Charter's legal department has approximately 60 in house counsel serving all functions ranging from intellectual property to human resources to contracts, located primarily in Stamford, St. Louis and Denver. Aaron works in one of their satellite offices in Washington, D.C.

He notes that outside counsel "are critical to his role, especially for developing strategy and seeing the big picture. They have different perspectives to offer from their experience representing other operators (notwithstanding conflicts) in the same space." He adds that their role litigating these matters on the front lines gives them a deep understanding of sometimes esoteric communications issues, and the ability to simply explain the issues and their practical implications to decision-makers within and outside the company."

Innovative Approaches

Aaron mentioned one high tech and one low tech area in which outside counsel can provide value to in house counsel:

- 1. Technology solutions.** They are always looking for artificial intelligence or other advanced technologies for routine issues, so if outside counsel can provide a solution, they don't have to contract for it themselves. Sheppard Mullin's AI offerings are part of that solution and Charter's General Counsel has been favorably impressed.
- 2. Delivering practical and easy-to-implement advice.** Most important is obtaining the best result. The gold standard is when outside counsel's advice is also practical, easy to implement, and doesn't involve reading through a long legal dissertation. It takes a keen understanding of the business and industry trends, involving study and analysis, to deliver such practical advice.

Diversity Matters

Aaron underscores that "there is no question that diversity matters and it's very important to Charter and me. But it also drives great results because the work product that diverse inside and outside counsel create offers different perspectives that are insightful and drive creative solutions."

He fondly recalled the Iftar (the meal eaten by Muslims after sunset during Ramadan) that Sheppard Mullin held when

he was still in the Washington, D.C. office and how that contributed to the sense of community throughout the office. As his wife is of Arab descent, he was familiar with an Iftar, but had never heard of a major law firm hosting one – and was delighted that Sheppard was the first.

Career Advice for Young Lawyers

Aaron has offered this advice to associates but it bears repeating: “Own every matter and treat assignments as more than simply a task – treat the assigning attorney as a client. Be ready with advice and recommendations, assess risk, and offer solutions.”

He added, “Prepare, prepare, prepare. The more prepared you are, the more confident you are and more adaptive you can be. It helps put you in control of any situation.”

How the Firm Prepared Him for Role at Charter

Aaron was lucky to have four mentors at Sheppard Mullin: Paul Werner (who he worked with at Hogan as a summer associate), Gardner Gillespie, Dave Thomas, and Ray Rutngamlug. They were key teachers, mentors, career advocates, and later, partners. He noted that “they remain awesome, and they contributed more than I can estimate. They introduced me to what I do, an area of law that I discovered through them which checked every box I was looking for in my career.”

His mentors were quick to push opportunities down, which gave him the experience and judgment to succeed in his current role. They helped him spread his wings at Sheppard so he could fly at Charter.

Sheppard Mullin Memories

Aaron most misses the sense of community – he felt more connected to colleagues at Sheppard Mullin than at any other law firm, both with the attorneys and staff, as the community was stronger. He continues to believe that Sheppard Mullin’s sense of community not only in the Washington, D.C. office but also across the firm is different than other firms and is what makes it a great place to work.

Life Outside of Work

Aaron and his wife have two children, aged three and one, who keep him busy and “always laughing.” He enjoys playing basketball and flag football in his spare time. He’s also “really into ‘do it yourself’ projects, working on tangible things” around his house in Arlington, Virginia.

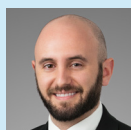
He also has devoted substantial time to pro bono, representing clients in post-conviction criminal proceedings, in litigation arising under the Endangered Species Act, and in many other contexts. He was a member of a small team working with the Mid-Atlantic Innocent Project that successfully represented a wrongfully convicted client before a state appellate court on his petitions for writs of actual innocence, resulting in his release from prison after having served more than 25 years for crimes he did not commit.

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We thank Aaron for taking the time to share his insights with us about his post-Sheppard Mullin career and wish him continued success. We hope that you will also keep in touch with us – and with each other. We’d love to hear from you.

ALUMNI MOVES AND NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

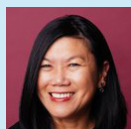
Below are a few recent in-house alumni moves and other notable achievements. Let us know if you’ve changed jobs so we can feature your move in a future edition.



Ken Contrata is now Senior Counsel – M&A at Nielson in New York. He was a corporate associate in our New York office from 2015 to 2019.



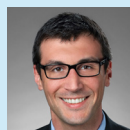
Tobin Dommer is now Senior Corporate Counsel, M&A and Corporate Ventures at Cisco Systems in San Jose. He was a corporate partner in our Palo Alto office from 2011 to 2019.



Jan Kang, Chief Legal Officer of Alphabet’s cybersecurity subsidiary Chronicle LLC, recently celebrated the ten year anniversary of the Women’s General Counsel Network, which she founded in 2009. WGCN has more than 800 female general counsel and heads of legal



Otis McGee is now an arbitrator and mediator at ADR provider JAMS in San Francisco. He was a litigation partner in our San Francisco office from 1997 to 2014, and also spent more than four years as Chief Assistant City Attorney for the City of Oakland.



Anthony Moshirnia is now Senior Counsel at National Instruments in Austin, Texas. He was a Government Contracts associate in our Los Angeles office from 2007 to 2019.

We regularly post in-house job opportunities from clients and friends of the firm on the Sheppard Mullin alumni site under “Career Opportunities.” We welcome in-house job postings from you; please send to alumni@sheppardmullin.com.

LOS ANGELES ALUMNI REUNION — GREAT TIME HAD BY ALL

We held a fun-filled attorney alumni reunion in Los Angeles on September 25. More than 60 alumni and Sheppard Mullin lawyers from the greater Los Angeles region enjoyed a poolside cocktail party at the lovely Hotel Figueroa in downtown LA. Click [here](#) to view photos from the event from our alumni site.

We hope to host our next alumni reunion on the East Coast in 2020, so stay tuned for the location!



UPCOMING EVENTS

Below are a few upcoming events the firm is hosting that are open to in-house counsel or human resources professionals. To RSVP or for more information about all events including our lawyers' outside speaking engagements, visit the [Events](#) page on our web site at: www.sheppardmullin.com/newsroom-events.html.

Choosing Between Patent and Trade Secret Protection: When, Why and How

ACC-SF Bay Area Patent Law Committee
December 10, 2019 / 12:00 noon -1:30 p.m. (PST)
Sheppard Mullin's San Francisco Office in Embarcadero Four

Value Creation Starts with the Patient: Value-Based Care Meets Behavioral Health

VBC Symposium
January 14, 2020 / 11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (PST)
Palace Hotel, Ralston Ballroom, San Francisco, CA

A View from the Capitol: 2020 Healthcare Policy, Legal and Regulatory Predictions

Women in Healthcare Leadership Collaborative
January 23, 2020 / 5:30- 8:00 p.m. (EST)
Sheppard Mullin's New York Office at 30 Rockefeller Plaza

2020 Wage and Hour Laws

Castle's Winter Seminar Series
February 19, 2020 / 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (PST)
Embassy Suites Anaheim Hotel - Garden Grove
February 25, 2020 / 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (PST)
Embassy Suites Hotel - Arcadia
March 19, 2020 / 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (PST)
Sheraton Gateway Hotel - LAX

2020 Employment Discrimination and Employee Relations Laws

Castle's Winter Seminar Series
February 20, 2020 / 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (PST)
Embassy Suites Anaheim Hotel - Garden Grove
February 26, 2020 / 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (PST)
Embassy Suites Hotel - Arcadia

2020 Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies

Castle's Winter Seminar Series
February 27, 2020 / 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (PST)
Embassy Suites Hotel - Arcadia
March 11, 2020 / 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (PST)
Embassy Suites Anaheim Hotel - Garden Grove



BOOMERANGS: YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN

"There's no place like home," repeated Dorothy while clicking her ruby slippers in *The Wizard of Oz*.

It's also proving to be true in the legal world, as there's a growing frequency of the boomerang effect occurring in this industry. The phenomenon of lawyers leaving and later returning to their former firm is not new. Lawyers have long been known to move in-house or take a government post for a few years or lateral to another law firm, and then go back to their former firm.

When those lawyers do return, they not only have insights that can benefit their firm, but they also value the firm that much more.

Sheppard Mullin currently has 14 "boomerangs" working at the firm, including several partners and senior attorneys. We asked them "why" they returned to the firm, and here are a few responses:



Partner **Larry Braun** was a corporate partner in our Los Angeles office from 1981 to 1998. He left in 1999 to join investment bank Barrington Associates as Managing Director. He rejoined the firm in 2000 as a corporate partner, stating why he came back:

"This is easy. I left because I wanted a new challenge. Practicing law and generating business became too easy. I learned several things in my journey. First, I am a lawyer and really want to be a trusted advisor to our clients. Second, and most importantly, although challenges are great, the people you work with and the feeling of community we have here are what drive happiness."



Partner **Carlo Van den Bosch** first joined Sheppard Mullin's Orange County office as an associate in 1996, straight out of law school. He was drawn to the firm's new intellectual property group and was among its first members (today, we stand at 100+members). In 1998, he moved to our Los Angeles office where, at the time, there was a greater concentration of IP practitioners. He left the firm in 2000 when one of the partners he worked with invited him to join him at a new venture. As a junior lawyer, he was "drawn to the adventure but probably had little understanding of what I was leaving behind."

Carlo rejoined Sheppard Mullin's Orange County office one year later, in 2001. He had made the decision to relocate to Orange County after becoming engaged to his now-wife, who at the time was also a Sheppard Mullin attorney. He noted that "he was fortunate to have the office welcome me back with open arms, which speaks volumes about of the people here." He further stated:

"There are countless reasons I came back to the firm: the quality of its people (both as individuals and as lawyers), its unwavering support in my practice even as an associate, its transparent systems of governance and accounting which are the bedrock of our collegiality, just to name a few. These are things I wanted to be a part of as my career progressed. And, since making partner in 2005, my conviction on these fronts has only grown. In hindsight, I think of my brief time away from the firm as having instilled a better appreciation of what makes Sheppard Mullin great."



Special Counsel **Helen Eckert** was an antitrust associate in our Los Angeles office from 2008 to 2016, joining from Heller Ehrman with Leo Caseria and another antitrust partner when that firm dissolved. She left to move to the Seattle area because of her husband's dream job at a biotech startup and to be closer to his family and the family ranch in Ellensburg, Washington. Although she was busy with two young children during this time, she kept in touch with the Antitrust & Competition Group and continued doing some contract work for the group, particularly on Samsung matters. In August 2018, she rejoined the firm as a Special Counsel working remotely, and just finished up a six-week price-fixing trial for a Chinese manufacturer and U.S. subsidiary in the Northern District of California. She noted her reasons for returning as:

"Although I love my life on Bainbridge Island and being a full-time mom to two busy young boys, I missed the intellectual stimulation that an exciting practice provides. I'd been working with Leo since 2005 when we were associates at Heller Ehrman together, and we formed a great working partnership. This, coupled with the firm allowing me to work remotely with people I truly like and respect, made it an easy decision to return. Returning to work remotely has been a seamless transition, and the break has allowed me to really appreciate what I had at Sheppard Mullin. I'm very appreciative to be back."

We are pleased that our culture and community continue to inspire alumni to return.

HELPING CLIENTS SUCCEED

Sheppard Mullin lawyers work on a range of litigation and transactions to help our clients succeed. Here are a few examples of our work over the last quarter.



Aligned Telehealth – We represented Aligned Telehealth in its acquisition by American Well, announced in November. Aligned is a leading national provider of on-demand telepsychiatry consultations, with cutting-edge solutions in behavioral health offered through a network of clinical experts and specialists in behavioral telehealth and telepsychiatry services to hospitals and health plans. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed, but the combined companies will create the largest enterprise telepsychiatry platform in the United States. Los Angeles partner **Will Chuchawat** led this deal, his fifth M&A deal to close over the last month.



Charter Communications – We secured an important victory for Charter Communications, Comcast, and other cable providers by convincing the Maine Public Utilities Commission to adopt the federal “cable rate” methodology for calculating pole attachment rental fees throughout the state. After numerous rounds of rulemaking comments, hearings, technical workshops, legislative amendments and negotiations — and over the vigorous opposition from Maine’s utility pole owners — the Maine commission unanimously adopted the proposal championed by the Sheppard Mullin legal team. Washington, D.C. partner **Dave Thomas** led this matter. Former Sheppard Mullin partner **Aaron George** (now Vice President and Assistant General Counsel at Charter, and our spotlight alumni in this issue) and Washington, D.C. Of Counsel **Gardner Gillespie** also were instrumental in the early stages of the proceedings.



Comerica Bank – We recently received an arbitration award in favor of Comerica Bank in a single Plaintiff lawsuit involving claims under the Fair Employment and Housing Act. The Plaintiff, a current employee and bank teller, filed claims for discrimination, harassment and retaliation on the basis of age and disability, violation of the CFRA, defamation, violation of the right to seek and designate legal representation under Labor Code section 923, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. There were no witnesses to corroborate her allegations yet the Plaintiff continued to pursue this lawsuit despite the fact that she was ultimately promoted to a full-time teller position, and she continued working with her alleged “harassers” for five years. Ultimately, the Arbitrator did not find the Plaintiff’s allegations compelling and found for Comerica on all causes of action. Los Angeles partner **Tracey Kennedy** led this matter.



Knight Transportation – We recently achieved a significant victory for Knight Transportation in *Valerie Sampson & David Raymond v. Knight Transportation*, venued in the Washington State Supreme Court. In a 6-3 decision, the Washington Supreme Court held that non-agricultural employers paying piece-rate pay do not need to separately track worktime on “activities outside of piece-rate work” and pay hourly for such time. Instead, non-agricultural Washington employers paying piece-rate compensation or commissions can satisfy their state minimum wage obligations by ensuring that each employee’s total weekly compensation divided by total hours worked in the same week exceeds the applicable minimum wage rate. *Sampson* aligns Washington’s minimum wage law with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, which has long been interpreted by the federal Department of Labor and several Circuit Courts of Appeals to measure minimum wage compliance on a workweek average basis. Had plaintiffs’ position been accepted, it would have been highly disruptive for any industry in Washington paying piece-rate compensation or commissions. Palo Alto partner **Paul Cowie** and San Diego partner **Karin Vogel** led this matter.



Vindex – We represented Vindex, the emerging leader in esports led by CEO Mike Sepso, co-founder of Major League Gaming and a world-class team of esports pioneers and veteran fintech entrepreneurs, in its \$60 million Series A Funding. The financing will allow Vindex to build a first-of-its-kind global esports infrastructure platform. Vindex also announced the acquisition of Next Generation Esports and the launch of Esports Engine, both industry-leaders in esports operations, production and technology. With these announcements, Vindex is immediately the largest pure-play esports infrastructure platform. New York partner **Shon Glusky** led this deal.



World Rugby and World Rugby Tournaments – We recently had a major victory by dismissing an action by USA Sevens against our clients World Rugby and World Rugby Tournaments in the New York County Supreme Court for lack of personal jurisdiction. This is the team’s second victory for World Rugby by dismissing actions in the U.S. against them. The New York action included claims for alleged fraud and breach of contract concerning World Rugby’s tender process for awarding Rugby Sevens tournaments in the U.S. The matter was led by New York partners **Ed Tillinghast** and **Rena Andoh**.

IN MEMORIAM

Kelly Crabb

Nov. 8, 1946-Oct. 27, 2019



It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of our colleague, Kelly Crabb. Kelly died on October 27, 2019 at his home in Utah surrounded by his family. He joined the firm in January 2010 as a partner in our Entertainment, Technology & Advertising Group practicing from Sheppard Mullin's downtown Los Angeles office. A few years ago, he moved back to Utah as a Special Counsel.

Throughout his career at the firm, Kelly was a tremendous colleague who was a joy to work with and a consummate professional. He worked on the broadcasting agreements and other projects on the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City, the 2012 Summer Games in London, and the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro. He also served as head international counsel to the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee for the 2008 Summer Games.

Kelly represented Paul McCartney with a world tour, Dave Matthews with a management agreement, and Charles Barkley in an endorsement deal in Japan and performed services for NBA China and Major League Baseball in China. A frequent lecturer, he wrote a book entitled *The Movie Business*, published by Simon & Schuster in 2005, and taught a "Sports Law in Practice" class at USC Law School for several years.

In his spare time, Kelly wrote a musical, *All My Friends Are Cowboys*, which became a 1998 PBS special and soundtrack album featuring Wilford Brimley, Johnny Cash, June Carter Cash and Roy Rogers.

Kelly is survived by his wife, Janice, and his five children. We will greatly miss having Kelly as a part of the Sheppard Mullin family.

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We encourage you to follow us on social media to hear the latest developments, from daily blog posts to upcoming events to pro bono news.



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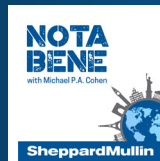


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