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Sheppard, Mullin Signs Six from Mayer Brown

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Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton has picked up a trio of white-collar partners it had its eye on for quite some time.

Bryan Daly, Charles Kreindler and Peter Morris joined the Los Angeles office as equity partners this week, each after two years or less at Mayer Brown. They were joined in the move by Barbara Taylor and Melissa Eaves, who made the move as special counsel.

Guy Halgren, Sheppard's San Diego-based chairman, said that the firm's been trying to recruit Daly, Kreindler and Morris for several years.

"We knew of them, of their reputation and had worked on cases with them," Halgren said. "We were very attracted to the fact that they were two-fers," meaning that "you get two talents [white-collar and civil defense] in one individual."

Separately, Sheppard, Mullin picked up former Mayer Brown IP partner Michael Molano in Silicon Valley.

Molano, who is joining the Palo Alto office after five years at Mayer Brown, said that the IP group at Sheppard "is 70 strong and thriving, busy with a lot of semiconductor IP litigation matters." Molano represents Marvell Semiconductor Inc. and Timbuk2, among others.

Sheppard, Mullin, a firm of roughly 560 lawyers, added 29 lateral partners in 2008 (not counting Daly, Kreindler, Morris and Molano), and 15 in 2007.

Daly said that client conflicts, which cropped up over time as the group tried to develop business, played a role in the L.A. lawyers' decision to switch firms. While white-collar defense is a large part of their practice, the three partners also handle civil litigation, an area he said they wanted to expand at Mayer Brown. Specifically, Daly said his group wanted to handle other litigation for existing clients, such as false



White-collar and civil defense litigators, from left, Charles Kreindler, Bryan Daly and Peter Morris, all former prosecutors, join Sheppard Mullin in Los Angeles.

claims and securities matters that commonly spin off white-collar cases in health care, aerospace and other regulated industries.

"We want to have a free hand to work both sides of the road, white-collar and civil," Daly said.

Daly and Kreindler, both former federal prosecutors, and Taylor and Eaves had joined Mayer Brown in January 2007 from the now-defunct L.A. boutique Beck, De Corso, Daly, Kreindler & Harris. Morris, a founding partner of Altman & Morris, had joined Mayer Brown the following April.

Sandy Lechtick, a Southern California legal recruiter with Esquire Inc. who was not involved in this deal, said it's a good catch for Sheppard, Mullin.

"It's a significant blow to Mayer Brown's growth objectives in the white-collar arena," he said. "Folks [like the former Beck firm lawyers] don't come along that often."

Morris said one of the matters that is moving with them to Sheppard, Mullin is some Broadcom Corp. stock option back-

dating work, in which Morris represents 13 current and former officers and employees in criminal and SEC cases; he also represents one of them in a shareholder derivative action. Daly said they are also bringing with them a number of matters for client Northrop Grumman Inc., as well as a false claims suit on behalf of Tyco International that's pending in Los Angeles Superior Court.

James Tancula, partner in charge of Mayer Brown's Los Angeles office, said that he was sorry to see the group go, but that his firm would continue to build its white-collar practice in California and nationally. In California, Mayer Brown still has three former assistant U.S. attorneys, he said, and in February it is adding Sean Patrick Casey, a federal prosecutor in Brooklyn who helped bring the criminal case against two former Bear Stearns hedge-fund managers.

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