

Sheppard Mullin Opens Dallas Office

Firm's Sixteenth Location To Support Large Local Client Base

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Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP announced today the opening of an office in Dallas – the firm's eleventh in the United States and sixteenth worldwide.

"The firm has experienced 27 consecutive years of revenue growth. We will continue to expand in our existing markets, but Dallas is an ideal new market for future growth as we have nearly 100 clients who are either headquartered or have substantial operations in the area," said Jon W. Newby, vice chairman of Sheppard Mullin. "The Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area has a dynamic and diversified economy which dovetails nicely with our broad practice mix and varied industry teams. We are thrilled to have attracted incredibly talented attorneys with diverse practices in the areas of commercial litigation, corporate, intellectual property, labor and employment, real estate and white collar to open the office and help us better serve our clients in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. This great group of team-oriented individuals will help us further develop our new office."

The founding partners in the new office, located at Chase Tower at 2200 Ross Avenue, include:

- Gemma L. Descoteaux, Stephen E. Fox and William B. Mateja from Polsinelli LLP
- Jennifer Klein Ayers and Steven G. Schortgen from K&L Gates LLP
- Carolyn R. Benson and Yvette J. Mabbun from Quilling, Selander, Lownds, Winslett & Moser, P.C.
- Jason Mueller from Locke Lord LLP
- Dwight M. Francis from Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP (now Foley and Lardner LLP)
- Evan C. Williams from Hunton & Williams LLP (now Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP)

The Dallas office will be led by managing partners Stephen Fox and Steven Schortgen and lateral hiring partner Gemma Descoteaux. The founding group brings substantial experience in commercial litigation, employment litigation and counseling, fund formation and management, intellectual property litigation and portfolio management, mergers and acquisitions, real estate asset management and white collar defense, including healthcare fraud and abuse and securities enforcement.

Fox, Schortgen and Descoteaux are excited by the opportunity to lead the Dallas office: "Sheppard Mullin's impressive client roster—many of which have relocated headquarters to Texas or have major operations here—and the firm's stellar client service reputation made joining the firm an easy one. Moreover, Sheppard Mullin provides us with the opportunity to work with extraordinary talent and offers even more capabilities to our clients across the firm's international platform. We were particularly impressed by the firm's collegial culture, strong financial performance and success in growing other offices. We're thrilled to be joining the firm and look forward to growing the Dallas office from the ground up."

About the Dallas Team

Jennifer Klein Ayers, who joins as a member of the Intellectual Property practice group, defends clients in complex intellectual property matters, including outsourcing disputes, patent infringement disputes, trademark and domain name disputes, trade secrets disputes, non-compete disputes, and unfair competition disputes. Ayers has worked on matters involving computer hardware and software, information technology systems, business process outsourcing (BPO) services, Medicaid management information systems (MMIS), child support enforcement systems (CSES), semiconductors, data encryption, bedding, and fitness equipment. She has represented both customers and providers in complex outsourcing disputes. Ayers received a J.D., *with honors*, from the University of Texas School of Law in 2009 and a B.A., *with high honors*, from the University of Texas in 2004.

Carolyn Benson, who joins as a member of the Real Estate, Land Use and Environmental practice group, represents Commercial Mortgage-Backed Securities (CMBS) Trusts, Special Servicers, SBA Lenders/Servicers, and financial institutions nationwide in all aspects of commercial real estate management and disposition, including workout matters, litigation, recovery, real estate owned (REO) transactions, and receivership. Her practice includes purchase and sale, leasing, and negotiating related agreements in the management and disposition of a wide variety of asset classes, including office buildings, warehouses, multi-family, retail centers, hotels and resorts, condominiums, assisted living centers, and more. She has also coordinated receiverships of commercial real estate assets, leading to control, recovery and liquidation of collateral for the benefit of the Noteholders. Benson received a J.D., *cum laude*, from Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law in 2008 and a B.A., *summa cum laude*, from Aurora University in 2004.

Gemma Descoteaux, who joins as a member of the Corporate practice group, represents buyers and sellers in mergers, acquisitions and divestitures, participants in complex joint ventures, partnerships and strategic alliances, issuers of securities, and providers and customers of outsourcing services, in a wide range of industries, including technology, media, real estate, manufacturing, business process outsourcing, and healthcare. Prior to private practice, Descoteaux spent 12 years working for Texas Instruments. Descoteaux received a J.D., *magna cum laude*, Order of the Coif, from Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law in 1998 and a B.A. from Grove City College in 1986.

Stephen Fox, who joins as a member of the firm's Labor and Employment and Business Trials practice groups, has spent more than two decades in boardrooms and courtrooms acting as a trusted advisor and litigation advocate for clients – from Fortune 500 companies to entrepreneurs – in complicated and high-profile business and employment disputes. On the employment side, Fox represents clients in trade secret theft and non-compete litigation, wage and hour collective and class actions, corporate downsizing, executive departures, leaves of absence, harassment investigations and compliance with federal and state anti-discrimination and retaliation statutes. His business litigation work includes trying cases involving intellectual property disputes, breaches of contract and fiduciary duties, business torts (fraud, defamation, disparagement, and unfair competition), corporate espionage, whistleblowing and qui tam actions. Fox is the only lawyer in Texas to be inducted as a Fellow into the nationally-renowned College of Labor and Employment Lawyers and to be selected by his peers as one of the Top 100 litigation attorneys in Texas. He received a J.D. from the University of Virginia in 1987 and a B.A., *magna cum laude*, from the University of Notre Dame in 1983.

Dwight Francis, who joins as a member of the Business Trial practice group, represents clients in complex litigation matters involving trade secret theft, unfair competition, business torts, violations of privacy laws, directors and officers disputes, breach of fiduciary duty claims, and a variety of other commercial litigation

disputes in federal and state courts across the country. He represents clients in a broad range of industries such as insurance, oil and gas, healthcare, manufacturing, aerospace, automobile and third-party administrators. Francis received a J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1992 and a B.A. from Augusta University in 1989.

Yvette Mabbun, who joins as a member of the Real Estate, Land Use and Environmental practice group, represents Commercial Mortgage-Backed Securities (CMBS) Trusts, Special Servicers, SBA Lenders/Servicers, and financial institutions nationwide in all aspects of commercial real estate management and disposition, including workout matters, litigation, recovery, real estate owned (REO) transactions, and receivership. Her practice includes purchase and sale, leasing, and negotiating related agreements in the management and disposition of a wide variety of asset classes, including office buildings, warehouses, multi-family, retail centers, hotels and resorts, condominiums, assisted living centers, and more. She has also coordinated receiverships of commercial real estate assets, leading to control, recovery and liquidation of collateral for the benefit of the Noteholders. Mabbun received a J.D., *cum laude*, from St. Mary's University School of Law in 1998 and a B.B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin in 1995.

William Mateja, who joins as a member of the Government Contracts, Investigations & International Trade practice group, has extensive knowledge in a variety of white collar defense matters, with an emphasis on healthcare fraud and abuse and securities enforcement. Mateja represents companies and individuals, including Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, in high-stakes government and internal investigations, civil enforcement actions, criminal prosecutions, regulatory actions and civil lawsuits across the country. A former prosecutor at the highest levels of the Department of Justice, Mateja was responsible for the Department's White Collar operations, as well as the day-to-day workings of its Corporate Fraud Task Force. He also oversaw all of the Department's health care fraud enforcement matters. He has been named to *D CEO Magazine's* "500 Most Powerful Business Leaders in Dallas-Fort Worth", *The National Law Journal's* "White Collar Crime Trailblazers", and was Texas Tech School of Law's 2017 "Alumnus of the Year". He is also routinely recognized as a "Texas Super Lawyer" by *Texas Monthly* and among *D Magazine's* "Best Lawyers in Dallas." Mateja received a J.D. from Texas Tech University School of Law in 1986 and a B.A. from the University of Notre Dame in 1983.

Jason Mueller, who joins as a member of the Intellectual Property practice group, focuses his practice on intellectual property and advertising issues. Mueller represents clients in federal courts around the country, in international tribunals, at alternative dispute resolution venues and at the U.S. Patent and Trademark office. A registered U.S. patent attorney, Mueller serves as lead trial counsel in copyright, trademark, patent, publicity and false advertising matters. He also has substantial experience handling all aspects of advertising and marketing law, including substantiation analysis, sweepstakes, contests and other promotions. He performs regulatory compliance reviews and develops and institutes compliance programs to manage risk related to brand management, advertising, activations and IP portfolios. Mueller received a J.D., *cum laude*, from Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law and a B.S. from Ouachita Baptist University in 1995.

Steven Schortgen, who joins as a member of the Intellectual Property practice group, is an experienced advisor to a wide range of technology and media industry clients. He has a long history of first-chair experience in high-profile and complex intellectual property litigation involving patents, trademark, copyright and trade secret issues. Because Schortgen has personally published commercial software, he has special insight into litigation issues in computer and computer-related industries and has litigated software and software-as-a-service (SaaS) claims extensively. Schortgen received a J.D., *magna cum laude*, Order of the Coif, from Cornell Law School in 1995 and a B.A., *magna cum laude*, from Trinity University in 1992.

Evan Williams, who joins as a member of the Corporate practice group, represents clients in the formation, structuring and management of private investment funds. He counsels investment fund sponsors on private fund formations across a wide variety of strategies, including private equity funds, real estate funds, debt and credit funds, hedge funds, venture capital funds, energy funds and other private investment fund strategies. He also advises investment management firms on complex corporate matters, such as implementing firm management arrangements; governance structures and compensation arrangements; negotiating seed investments and other strategic investments in fund sponsors; negotiating placement agent agreements and other marketing arrangements; and negotiating transfers of equity interests in funds and fund sponsors. Williams received a J.D. from Washington University School of Law in 2007 and a B.A., *magna cum laude*, from Westminster College in 2004.

Attorneys

Jennifer Klein Ayers

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Practice Areas

Corporate

Intellectual Property

Labor and Employment

Litigation

Real Estate and Land Use

White Collar Defense and Corporate Investigations