

Shumaker Brings On Litigators From Tampa Boutique

By **Madison Arnold**

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Shumaker Loop & Kendrick LLP has added two new partners to its litigation and disputes service line from their own firm, Murnaghan Ferguson & Schmidt PA, where one worked as managing shareholder in Tampa.

Peter P. Murnaghan and Jill K. Schmidt joined Shumaker as part of the firm's effort to enhance its litigation practice by addressing a growing demand for legal services in construction defect cases and the defense of business clients against personal injury claims, the firm said. Schmidt told Law360 Pulse Thursday that the duo chose Shumaker in part because of its platform and the great lawyers already there.

"I think just understanding the business side of [law firms] allows you to effectively navigate that area where a lot of lawyers can get lost," Schmidt said about their experience running their own firm. "But I think we understand that side of it, and that allows us to have an understanding of how to help the firm be more successful through our work."

The duo's previous firm is no longer operating, Schmidt said.

Murnaghan has more than 40 years of litigation experience, with a practice centered around civil trial matters. He served as managing shareholder of his previous firm and has successfully handled cases that involve personal injury claims, wrongful death, product liability and commercial issues.

He has helped clients in the areas of highway construction, trucking operations and industrial plant operations, and can take on aviation litigation, as well. Murnaghan is significantly involved in the aviation world, serving as a member of the American Bar Association's Select Subcommittee on



Peter P. Murnaghan



Jill K. Schmidt

Aviation Law and the [Florida Bar Subcommittee](#) on Aviation and Space Law — he even flies himself as a commercial pilot with more than 2,300 hours of flight time, the firm said.

A graduate of the University of Florida's Levin College of Law, Murnaghan holds a bachelor's degree in business administration, also from the University of Florida, according to his profile on Shumaker's website.

Schmidt is a trial attorney and arbitrator with "high-performance" litigation skills, the firm said. Her practice areas include civil trial practice, wrongful death and personal injury, construction law and commercial law, and she has successfully tried cases before juries and presented appellate arguments before Florida's First and Second District Courts of Appeal, according to her profile on the firm's website.

"A lot of times our clients come to us with problems, and we get to help them navigate through litigation, which can be incredibly stressful for people," Schmidt said. "Helping them achieve whatever goals they're looking to achieve through it, it's sort of empowering to be able to do that, and help people through those difficult times."

She can also provide clients with pre-litigation dispute counseling and corporate training for accident investigations and preservation requirements, the firm said.

Schmidt earned her law degree from the University of Miami School of Law and a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Central Florida, according to her profile.

"Jill and Peter are nationally recognized trial lawyers with outstanding market reputations and profiles, and their addition to the team will further strengthen our practice," said Michele Leo Hintson, Shumaker's litigation and disputes regional service line leader, in a statement.

Murnaghan and Schmidt joined Shumaker on the heels of a team of **nine insurance recovery attorneys** who were added to the firm last month.

Shumaker was founded in 1925 and has grown to a team of more than 300 lawyers and advisors, 55 paralegals and 550 employees. It has nine offices located in Toledo and Columbus, Ohio; Tampa, Sarasota, Tallahassee and Dade City, Florida; Charleston and Greenville, South Carolina; and Charlotte, North Carolina, according to its website.

"Shumaker's business clients face an evolving array of legal challenges best resolved by experienced and effective trial attorneys," said Jaime Austrich, partner and vice chair of Shumaker's management committee, in a statement. "The addition of Peter and Jill rounds out our litigation practice to meet this need in today's business landscape. Their wealth of courtroom experience will be an invaluable asset to Shumaker's clients navigating significant and complex legal matters."

--Editing by Scott Russell.

Update: This story was updated to include comments from Schmidt.