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Shumaker Adds Employee Benefits Team From Two Firms

By **Jack Rodgers**

Law360 (June 14, 2023, 3:24 PM EDT) -- Shumaker Loop & Kendrick LLP has added former attorneys from McGrann Shea Carnival Straughn & Lamb Chtd., and Kutak Rock LLP, along with a team of paralegals and administrative assistants from both firms, according to a Tuesday announcement.

Roger Stelljes, Christy Lawrie, Scott Crossman and Amy Court join the firm from McGrann Shea, according to their LinkedIn profiles. The firm also added Cindy Davis as a partner, and paralegal benefits specialist Andrea Cerny, who both join from Kutak Rock.

The firm additionally hired two legal administrative assistants, Nicole Means and Jen Reyes, from McGrann Shea and Kutak Rock, respectively. Shumaker's new additions are all based in the firm's Minneapolis office.

Stelljes joins Shumaker after almost 20 years with McGrann Shea, according to his LinkedIn profile. The firm said in total, Stelljes has 29 years of legal experience, and focuses his practice on employee benefits matters, including qualified retirement and health plan matters. Some of his clients include those who work with laborers, ironworkers and other construction clients, the firm said.

Lawrie also joins Shumaker from McGrann Shea, according to her LinkedIn profile, where she worked for over 12 years. Her practice focuses on employee benefits matters, helping clients navigate single and multiemployer benefit plans, the firm said. Her practice also includes working with funds, administrators and service providers to help understand cybersecurity regulations and respond to cyber threats, the firm said.

Crossman has more than 35 years of legal experience, and joins Shumaker after almost 28 years with McGrann Shea, according to his LinkedIn profile. His practice focuses on multiemployer fringe benefits funds issues, primarily in the upper Midwest, according to the firm.

Court joins Shumaker after more than 20 years with McGrann Shea, according to her LinkedIn profile. Her practice involves benefit issues, advising plan trustees and administrators on benefit matters, plan provisions, eligibility, withdrawal liability and other issues, the firm said. She also represents plan trustees in litigation, the firm said.

Davis joins Shumaker with more than 30 years of legal experience, her most recent role being with Kutak Rock. Her practice focuses on working with employee benefit plan sponsors, boards of trustees and administrators on potential challenges unique to Taft-Hartley employee benefits plans, the firm said.

In an interview with Law360 Pulse Wednesday, both Court and Davis said their respective firms had previously worked with one another and that the team joining Shumaker had all known of one another before deciding to join forces.

"We've all known each other a long time," Davis said. "We work in the Taft-Hartley multiemployer world, which is a pretty self-contained group of clients in the Twin Cities. So, we've worked together and we've worked with mutual clients over many years."

Court added that the team all joined this month, but before that, in December, discovered incidentally the attorneys were all looking for a new home to combine forces, she said.

"When we made that discovery we figured out that we wanted to make it work, to join forces, and find a place that had a multiemployer practice," Court said. "And now we have one of the biggest practices in the Midwest."

Davis said one of the reasons she moved her practice was to find like-minded attorneys who were experienced in the niche benefits practice that she focuses on, she said.

"I wanted to be with a group of people that understand my Taft-Hartley multiemployer practice, and it's very hyper niche," Davis said. "Benefits is a niche in and of itself, and multiemployer Taft-Hartley is a subset of employee benefits which is really unique so to have people who understand that practice, both locally and through Schumaker as a whole, was very enticing."

"I know that one of the major factors that motivated all of us is we wanted to be in an environment where we could provide even better, more-robust legal services for our clients and Schumaker has a long history of also working with Taft-Hartley plans," Davis added.

Jennifer Compton, chairwoman of the firm's management committee, said in a statement the firm was excited for the team of attorneys, paralegals and business professionals to start their new roles.

"The demand for employee benefits support for businesses has been steadily rising, especially in light of the pandemic and the subsequent changes in workforce dynamics," she said. "As employers increasingly seek legal guidance to navigate the ever-evolving regulatory landscape, this strategic acquisition reinforces our commitment to better serve our clients."

Scott Newsom, Schumaker's benefits team leader, said in a statement that the firm was "fortunate to add this highly qualified and respected employee benefits team to our firm."

"Their depth of experience will be a tremendous asset to our clients as we strive to address their challenges and opportunities with creative, aggressive, and efficient solutions," Newsom said. "We are committed to providing comprehensive legal services at the highest level of performance. This acquisition further advances our position in the market."

--Editing by Alex Hubbard.

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