

New Sheppard Mullin Practice Tackles Climate Change

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Thursday, May 17, 2007 --- Meeting the challenges of an environmental crisis head on, Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP has launched a Global Climate Change practice specifically dedicated to helping clients understand and tackle emission issues.

Sheppard Mullin partners Randolph C. Visser and M. Elizabeth McDaniel head the new practice, which officially started on Tuesday.

Visser comes from the firm's Construction, Environmental, Real Estate and Land Use Litigation practice group in Los Angeles, and has practiced in environmental law for over thirty years.

McDaniel is a member of the same practice group's San Francisco office, and has represented and counseled clients on a wide variety of environmental compliance issues for more than twenty years.

They will be joined by litigation partners Polly Towill and Stephen J. O'Neil, as well as close to 50 other attorneys in various different specializations across the firm and all over the world.

"Climate change is one of those issues that influences all our lives—it crosscuts every single practice area I can think of. However...the practice of law has become so specialized that we often lose sight of the big picture. [There are] not many general practitioners any more," Visser said.

"Our group is an interdisciplinary group of lawyers from various practices that will concentrate on helping clients chart the waters of greenhouse gas emissions," he explained.

The practice will counsel and plead cases on behalf of clients across a wide array of industries and practice areas in the industrial, energy and transportation sectors.

Visser said the time was particularly ripe to start a Global Climate Change practice because of the recent surge in interest in regulating greenhouse gas emissions.

"I've practiced since the 70s, pretty much since the environmental movement was formally started, and I've seen what happens through environmental regulatory programs. When an environmental challenge like this achieves public recognition—this time through [Vice President] Al Gore's 'Inconvenient

Truth'—politicians take notice and laws are passed,” Visser said.

“It’s always been my view that it’s best to figure out how to surmount those challenges early on. You need to be involved in these things for clients at the start,” he added.

As the practice will be focusing on a broad spectrum of issues related to climate change, it will bring in other policy, strategy, technical and environmental consulting professionals to provide a more comprehensive service.

“I think when a client comes to our firm for help with climate change, it’s not always going to be just a legal issue. You need those other professionals. You need to be able to tell the client, ‘We can do the legal work, but these guys can help you with rule-making, with technical certification and so on,’” Visser said.

“This interdisciplinary effort allows me to draw back together all my colleagues in all these specialized practices to work together as a team solving a common problem...If I accomplish that, I will consider this [effort] a great success for that reason alone.”

Founded in 1927, Sheppard Mullin is a full service law firm with 490 attorneys in 10 offices located throughout California, New York, Washington D.C. and Shanghai, China.