

### Sheppard Mullin Mourns Loss of Retired Partner Merrill Francis

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#### Press Contact

Ralph Richardson

T: +1.213.617.5542

rrichardson@sheppardmullin.com

Merrill R. Francis, retired partner and of counsel with Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP in Los Angeles, passed away yesterday. Francis spent his entire career at Sheppard Mullin. Before his retirement, he chaired the firm's Finance and Bankruptcy practice group, and held a number of leadership positions within the firm, including service on its Executive Committee.

"Merrill was an outstanding lawyer and leader at Sheppard Mullin, who began his career with the firm in 1959, became a partner in 1965 and retired in 2001," said Sheppard Mullin partner Bob Williams. "Our firm is deeply saddened by his passing."

Francis was a prominent finance lawyer, with special expertise in the fields of bankruptcy and creditors' rights. His work focused upon representation of secured creditors, unsecured creditors, creditors' committees, and trustees in Chapter 11 corporate reorganization proceedings. Francis was known for his encyclopedic knowledge of the bankruptcy law and for his enthusiastic advocacy on behalf of his clients. Those clients included national and international banks, asset-based lenders and other commercial lenders in the documentation of complex financial secured and unsecured transactions. During his career-long association with Sheppard Mullin, the firm experienced a rapid growth of financial clientele and an expansion of the group of lawyers who engaged in practice on behalf of financial institutions. His expertise as a bankruptcy and finance lawyer was recognized both on the west coast and on the national stage: he served as President of the Financial Lawyers Conference, on the Executive Committee of the American College of Bankruptcy and as Chair of the Business Bankruptcy Committee of the American Bar Association.

Among his many professional achievements, Francis successfully represented the Official School and College Districts Subcommittee in the Orange County Chapter 9 Bankruptcy proceeding where the schools had over one billion dollars invested in the Orange County Pool. He was a frequent lecturer on bankruptcy, workouts, uniform commercial code, and debtor/creditor relations for the California Continuing Education of the Bar, Business Bankruptcy Committee of the American Bar Association, Bankruptcy Judges Conference, California Bankers Association, Farm Credit Banks, and various sections of the Los Angeles County Bar Association, Financial Lawyers Conference, and Practising Law Institute.

Francis received his J.D., *Order of the Coif*, from Stanford University and B.A., *magna cum laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa*, from Pomona College. Prior to commencing law practice, he served as an officer in the United States Navy.

## Practice Areas

Commercial Lending and Financial Transactions