

Sheppard Mullin Announces 2019 Partner Class

Fifteen Attorneys Promoted Firmwide

02.14.2019

Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP is pleased to announce that 15 attorneys have been promoted to partner. The 2019 Partner Class includes Hector A. Agdeppa (San Diego (Del Mar)), Greg L. Berk (Orange County), Jennifer Chavez (San Diego), Erinn M. Contreras (San Francisco), John F. Golembesky (San Diego), Justin J. Hepworth (Orange County), Whitney Hodges (San Diego), Rachel Tarko Hudson (San Francisco), Benjamin A. Huffman (Chicago), Siraj Husain (Palo Alto), Alexander Lazar (New York), Fatema K. Merchant (Washington, D.C.), Jonathan D. Moss (Los Angeles), Ryan E. Roberts (Washington, D.C.), and Adam Shipley (New York and San Diego).

Commenting on the newest group of partners, Sheppard Mullin chairman Guy Halgren said, "We are extremely pleased to welcome this outstanding group of attorneys to our partner ranks. This class spans practice groups and offices and they are all committed to upholding the institutional values of the firm – client service, entrepreneurialism and collegiality. Sheppard Mullin has experienced 27 years of year-over-year profitable growth, and this class of partners will play a critical role in continuing that momentum."

Meet Sheppard Mullin's 2019 Partner Class:

Hector A. Agdeppa is member of the Intellectual Property practice group and is based in the San Diego (Del Mar) office. He specializes in patent preparation and prosecution in the electrical, mechanical and computer software arts, and is well-versed in the management and monetization of patent portfolios. He is also experienced in inter partes review proceedings, tech transfer and licensing, IP due diligence, opinion/freedom to operate assessments, and provides patent litigation support for a variety of clients, large and small, covering a broad range of industries. Previously, Agdeppa worked as a patent examiner at the United States Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) in a telecommunications and data networking art unit. Prior to his USPTO experience, Agdeppa worked as a software test engineer for Motorola, Inc. and as a validation engineer for Abbott Laboratories and the Sverdrup Facilities Group. He received a J.D. from American University and a B.S. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Greg L. Berk leads the firm's immigration practice and is a member of the Labor and Employment practice group. Based in the Orange County office, Berk is a Certified Specialist in Immigration and Nationality Law by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization. Berk has more than 20 years of experience advising on all aspects of U.S. immigration matters. He assists employers worldwide with the hiring and retention of foreign national talent. He also works with investors on E-2 and EB-5 matters, as well as I-9 and other immigration compliance matters. Berk is the author of the upcoming book *Immigration Checklists and Practice Pointers – A Desk Reference for Attorneys and HR Managers*. He has also taught immigration law at two college-level paralegal certification programs in California. He received a J.D. from Western State University College of Law;

an M.B.A. from George Washington University; and a B.A. from California State University.

Jennifer Chavez is a member of the Real Estate, Land Use and Environmental practice group and is based in the San Diego office. Her practice focuses on land use and development matters, including purchase and sale transactions and compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Subdivision Map Act, the Coastal Act and planning and zoning laws, as well as other general real estate transactional matters. She has represented developers, landowners and public agencies in a variety of projects, including large and small-scale residential, commercial, industrial, mixed-use, and educational development projects throughout California. She also represents clients before city councils, county boards of supervisors, planning commissions and other regulatory bodies to secure land use entitlements, permits and approvals and also involves defending land use entitlements in litigation matters before trial and appellate courts. In addition, Chavez has experience drafting and negotiating agreements with public agencies and private property owners concerning the use and development of real property, including development and improvement agreements, funding and reimbursement agreements, easement agreements and covenant agreements. She received a J.D., *magna cum laude*, from Pepperdine University School of Law and a B.A. from the University of California, San Diego, where she was on the Provost Honors List.

Erinn M. Contreras is a member of the Business Trial practice group and is based in the San Francisco office. She is also leader of the Construction Team. Contreras is a seasoned construction and real estate attorney who represents owners, developers, general contractors, subcontractors and construction lenders in all stages of construction projects. She negotiates and drafts a variety of construction contracts, including design-build contracts, EPC contracts, professional/consultant agreements and modified American Institute of Architects (AIA) contracts. Contreras also has extensive experience litigating construction-related claims, including construction defect, delay, cost overruns, mechanic's liens, quiet title and products liability. In addition to her construction and real estate practice, she also has significant employment-related experience, consisting of both employer counseling and employment litigation. She regularly advises employers on a wide array of employment issues, including employee terminations, wage and hour compliance, leaves of absence and requests for accommodation. She received a J.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles and a B.A. from Westminster College.

John F. Golembesky is a member of the Corporate practice group and is based in the San Diego office. He has represented clients in the healthcare industry for more than 20 years. He regularly represents healthcare providers, private equity firms and strategic investors in connection with the purchase and sale of healthcare businesses. Golembesky also serves as outside general counsel to many large, multi-specialty medical groups and advises them on complex hospital affiliations, physician compensation plans, corporate governance, and operational matters. He is frequently called on to counsel clients about complex healthcare regulatory and compliance issues, as well as data security and privacy laws. Golembesky rejoined Sheppard Mullin in 2016, after having served as the Chief Legal Officer and general counsel for a Los Angeles-based technology company. He received a J.D. from the University of Southern California and a B.A., *cum laude*, from the University of San Diego.

Justin J. Hepworth is a member of the Tax, Employee Benefits, and Trusts and Estates practice group and is based in the Orange County office. His practice encompasses a broad range of state and local tax matters, from planning, compliance, and transactional matters to controversy matters in audit and through litigation. He also regularly advises clients on state and local tax implications of restructurings, mergers, acquisitions, spinoffs and asset sales. He helps clients with audit defense, voluntary disclosure, unclaimed property (escheat law),

and other controversy and compliance matters. Hepworth has extensive experience handling a broad range of multistate issues, including nexus, sales and use tax exemptions, sourcing and characterization, research and development credits, unitary business matters, California Prop. 13 change in ownership issues, and residency planning and audits. He received a J.D., *magna cum laude*, *Order of the Coif*, from Tulane University and a B.S. from the University of Idaho.

Whitney Hodges is a member of the Real Estate, Land Use and Natural Resources practice group and is based in the San Diego office. Her practice focuses on advising and representing major residential, industrial, commercial and mixed-use development projects, as well as Native American Indian tribes and renewable energy developers through all phases of the land use regulatory process and environmental compliance. Her land use experience includes real estate due diligence investigations, negotiating and drafting development agreements, processing land use entitlements, advising tribal governments on environmental and natural resources law, and appearing before governmental agencies and commissions. She also represents developers and management in union negotiations. Hodges serves as general counsel for the San Diego Humane Society, and she is a registered lobbyist with the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, and San Diego Regional Airport Authority, and the San Diego Port Authority. She received a J.D. and a B.A., with honors, from the University of Southern California.

Rachel Tarko Hudson is a member of the Intellectual Property practice group and is based in the San Francisco office. She focuses her practice on clients in the retail, food and beverage, and technology sectors. She advises clients conducting advertising campaigns, contests and sweepstakes, and cause marketing campaigns on substantiation, clearance, and legal compliance. She also counsels clients on compliance with e-mail, telephone, and SMS marketing regulations. In addition, Hudson drafts and negotiates agreements for software, SaaS, technology services, logistics, marketing, outsourcing, intellectual property licensing, sourcing and distribution agreements, and other commercial and transactional matters. In connection with privacy and data security, Hudson counsels clients on compliance with domestic and international privacy laws, including in Canada and the EU. She helps clients with drafting privacy policies and online terms of service for websites and mobile applications. She also counsels clients experiencing data security breaches on response, notification and mitigation. She received a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center and a B.A., *cum laude*, from the University of Pennsylvania.

Benjamin A. Huffman is a member of the Energy, Infrastructure and Project Finance industry team and the Real Estate, Land Use & Environmental practice group in the Chicago office. Huffman works with financing providers, including banks, non-bank lenders, insurance companies and investment funds as well as financing users, including project developers, public company borrowers and privately held borrowers in connection with construction, acquisition and working capital debt facilities, passive tax and cash equity investments and secondary-market purchase and sale of debt and equity financing products, primarily in the renewable energy sector. Huffman received a J.D., *summa cum laude*, from Notre Dame Law School and a B.A., *cum laude*, from DePauw University.

Siraj Husain is a member of the Intellectual Property practice group in the Palo Alto office. He focuses his practice on intellectual property and patent strategy in various technical areas with an emphasis in software and computer science. He specializes in building and managing patent portfolios, both in the United States and internationally. He also represents clients in a variety of domestic and international business transactions involving intellectual property and technology rights, including acquiring and licensing intellectual property. Husain received a J.D. from Loyola Law School and a B.S. from the University of California, Riverside.

Alexander Lazar is a member of the Corporate practice group in the New York office. Lazar counsels emerging and established enterprises on a broad range of corporate and commercial matters in the ecommerce, internet/mobile, fintech, digital media, life sciences and high technology industry sectors. He advises entrepreneurs and emerging companies from inception through exit on entity formation; angel, venture capital and private equity financings; mergers and acquisitions; and public securities offerings; as well as corporate governance and day-to-day corporate matters. He represents mature public and private companies in their strategic acquisitions and minority investments, with a focus on acquisitions of, and investments in, venture capital and private equity-backed technology and life sciences companies. Lazar is also experienced in advising companies of all stages in complex commercial transactions, including joint ventures, licensing, development, distribution, and other collaborative arrangements. He received a J.D., *magna cum laude*, *Order of the Coif*, from Boston College Law School and a B.A., *magna cum laude*, from Brown University.

Fatema K. Merchant is a member of the Government Contracts, Investigations, and International Trade practice group in the Washington, D.C. office. She focuses her practice on international trade and white collar criminal defense work, which includes the U.S. government's regulation of international trade, cross-border transactions and foreign investment. Merchant has extensive experience conducting internal investigations and responding to U.S. as well as foreign government investigations and enforcement efforts, compliance counseling, and transactional due diligence related to anti-corruption, export controls, economic sanctions, anti-money laundering, and customs laws and regulations. Merchant regularly assists clients with developing, implementing, and evaluating effective compliance programs across a broad spectrum of legal risk areas. She counsels clients across industries on regulatory filings stemming from cross-border transactions, including filings with the U.S. State Department and the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). She received a J.D. from American University Washington College of Law and a B.A. from Al-Jamea-Tus-Saifiyah Arabic Academy.

Jonathan D. Moss is a member of the Business Trial practice group in the Los Angeles office. His practice entails handling complex business disputes, class action defense, securities litigation, shareholder derivative lawsuits, corporate dissolution actions, entertainment litigation, real estate disputes and defending allegations of breach of fiduciary duty and fraud. Moss is experienced in all aspects of the litigation process and in handling alternative dispute resolution proceedings to successful conclusion. Moss also has significant appellate experience, including arguing cases before the California Courts of Appeal and briefing cases in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and United States Supreme Court. He received a J.D. from the University of Southern California and a B.S. from Cornell University.

Ryan E. Roberts is a member of the Government Contracts, Investigations, and International Trade practice group in the Washington, D.C. office. Roberts has counseled clients, ranging from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies, regarding compliance with the vast regulations applicable to government contractors. Roberts has conducted numerous complex investigations, both internal and in response to allegations made by various enforcement agencies, and represented government contractors in a broad range of litigation matters, including litigation under the False Claims Act, bid protests, and appeals. Roberts received a J.D. from The George Washington University Law School and a B.A. from the University at Albany, State University of New York.

Adam Shipley is a member of the Corporate practice group in the New York and San Diego offices. His practice focuses on representing clients in a variety of complex transactions in several industries, including energy, manufacturing, healthcare, industrials, life sciences and information technology. Shipley has extensive experience negotiating and managing company sale transactions, having advised many private equity and

strategic buyers and sellers in buyout transactions. He also helps investors in venture and growth equity transactions. Shipley received a J.D., *cum laude*, from Notre Dame Law School and a B.A., *cum laude*, from Vanderbilt University.

Attorneys

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Practice Areas

Corporate

Governmental Practice

Intellectual Property

Litigation

Real Estate, Energy, Land Use & Environmental

Tax

Industries

Energy, Infrastructure and Project Finance