

News

Vorys Continues Growth in Houston; Welcomes Nine Litigators

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Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP announced today that nine trial lawyers, with diverse civil litigation backgrounds, will join the firm's Houston office. The attorneys will start at the firm on January 5. Their arrival continues the firm's expansion in Houston and strengthens Vorys nationally recognized litigation and energy groups.

Dick Schwartz, Monica Oathout, David Finck, Phillip Bechter, Steve Rech and Heather Kabele will join Vorys as partners. Jim Marrow will join as of counsel, and Mark Merrell and Jim Barnish come to the firm as associates. All nine lawyers most recently practiced law at Schwartz, Junell, Greenberg & Oathout LLP in Houston.

"We're thrilled to welcome this respected group of Texas trial lawyers to Vorys," said Steve Browning, the managing partner of the Vorys Houston office. "Their culture of integrity and team approach to the practice of law matches ours. We're committed to long-term growth in Houston and enhancing the services we provide to our energy clients from our Houston office. The addition of these attorneys is illustrative of those strategies."

The new attorneys will join the 14 lawyers already practicing from the Vorys Houston office, which opened in 2009.

"We are very excited about joining a great firm," Schwartz said. "Like us, Vorys is committed to getting results through excellence and integrity. We're proud of the long relationships we have with our clients and this move will allow us to better serve them."

Schwartz has tried over 60 cases in many forums in the U.S. He has nearly 35 years of experience as a successful trial lawyer and an extensive knowledge regarding the business of oil and gas exploration, production and refining. He has handled complex matters arising from refinery and well site operations, including explosions, fires and well control events. Schwartz also has significant experience counseling clients on litigation related to employment contracts; terminations; separations; claims of discrimination and retaliation; breach of non-competition/non-solicitation/confidentiality agreements; and theft of

trade secrets.

Recognized by *Chambers USA* as a leading lawyer in employment law, Oathout has more than 25 years of experience in labor and employment litigation. She provides guidance and serves as trial counsel to employers in claims involving unlawful termination, discrimination, discipline, retaliation, medical leave, disability, harassment, wrongful discharge, unsafe workplace, non-competition covenants, reductions in force and wage and hour issues. She also has significant experience conducting internal corporate investigations.

Finck primarily counsels clients on energy litigation matters. His practice is focused on the following industries: power line and pipeline construction; transportation; and oil and gas. As a result of his work in these industries, Finck has developed significant experience with transmission and distribution lines and related equipment, pipelines, refineries, industrial facilities and transportation matters.

Bechter's practice focuses on commercial litigation, complex insurance coverage, construction, injury/death litigation and employment disputes. He has handled insurance matters involving in excess of a billion dollars. He has over 20 years of experience in the area of governmental immunity and represents governmental entities in matters involving civil rights, health care liability and wrongful death. Bechter also performs workplace investigations for public and private entities.

Rech primarily represents businesses involved in complex commercial disputes. He has extensive first chair jury trial experience in state and federal court. He has also tried significant disputes in arbitral forums. Rech's work focuses mostly in the energy and real estate sectors.

Kabele focuses her practice on business and financial litigation, and also has experience in oil and gas, real estate and employment litigation. She has represented brokerage firms in matters involving alleged sales practice violations, securities fraud, breach of settlement and trade secrets theft. She has also represented clients at trial and arbitration and has handled appeals.

Marrow's practice is focused on appellate law and general litigation, including complex commercial disputes, business litigation, oil and gas lawsuits, employment disputes and personal injury cases. He also has experience in trial and arbitration matters, including the formulation of initial strategy, discovery, mediation, trial or arbitration.

Barnish has experience in business and commercial litigation, including matters related to energy and utility infrastructure.

Merrell's practice is focused in the areas of complex commercial litigation, real property litigation and eminent domain.

In addition, two paralegals, Leslie Ohayon and Nanette Koger, will join Vorys.

About Vorys: Vorys was established in 1909 and has grown to be one of the largest law firms with nearly 375 attorneys in seven offices in Houston; Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Akron, Ohio; Washington, D.C.; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Vorys currently ranks as one of the 200 largest law firms in the United States according to *American Lawyer* magazine. To learn more about the Vorys Houston office, visit vorys.com/houston-office.