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Robb Adkins to head BakerHostetler's new San Francisco office

By Tyler Piolet

Daily Journal Staff Writer

BakerHostetler opened its 15th national office with Robb Adkins, former head of financial fraud enforcement under President Barack Obama, moving from Winston & Strawn LLP to head the new San Francisco operation, the firm announced Monday.

The moves reflect the continuing strength of the San Francisco legal market, analysts, law firm recruiters, and members of the firm said.

Adkins, who is the former managing partner of Winston & Strawn's San Francisco office and co-chair of its white collar practice, will lead BakerHostetler's white collar investigations and securities enforcement and litigation team from the new office.

This is a strategic move for the 1,000-attorney international firm as it aims to strengthen its presence on the West Coast to meet a growing legal business climate, according to Eric Sagerman, managing partner of BakerHostetler's Los Angeles office.

"We wanted to serve our clients better, looking to expand market share," Sagerman said in a phone interview. "It really reflects the desire for geographically balancing the firm on the West Coast, and there is certainly a demand for it."

This growth trajectory in California's legal business market has existed for the last few years, according to Larry Watanabe, partner at the California legal placement firm Watanabe LLC.



ADKINS

BakerHostetler's move to San Francisco, he said, is an indication of that, "Market competition in San Francisco remains to be the most vigorous in the state of California," Watanabe said.

Peter Zeughauser, a legal strategist with the Zeughauser Group, which provides consulting services for law firms, said the move is "a sign that San Francisco remains one of the major markets in the United States, maybe second after New York and certainly in the top three with Washington."

"A guy like that in a market like San Francisco is bound to succeed opening an office for a firm like BakerHostetler," Zeughauser said. "Nobody likes to lose a guy like Robb, but Winston has a very deep white collar bench. They'll be just fine."

Adkins, who graduated from Georgetown Law, said in a phone interview Monday he valued his near decade-

long tenure with Winston & Strawn.

"Winston is a great firm, fantastic attorneys and I had a wonderful time there," Adkins said. "But I decided that it was the right time for me to take on a new challenge of starting a new office in San Francisco for a national law firm. It is rare to get in on the ground floor and open an office for a national law firm."

He said he hopes to grow the office in a number of strategic areas, including white-collar and internal investigations and complex commercial litigation and antitrust.

"Ideally we'd like to have a trial practice that is a destination practice in California," Adkins said.

Over the past year BakerHostetler added 17 attorneys to its California roster, several of whom have a focus on white-collar crime and litigation. Its other West Coast offices are in Los Angeles, Costa Mesa and Seattle.

Adkins brings a successful background of white-collar litigation. For example, he was one of the trial attorneys in the criminal prosecution of Enron Corp. and its executives, Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling, in 2006.

Adkins will now work alongside BakerHostetler attorney Shawn Cleveland, whom he argued against in the Enron case.

"It's a great reunion," Adkins said.

BakerHostetler is currently representing the Official Committee of Tort Claimants in the pending Chapter 11 case of PG&E Corporation in the Northern District of California.

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