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Benesch Adds 5 Lawyers To Litigation Practice

By **Joyce Hanson**

Law360, New York (April 11, 2017, 3:15 PM EDT) -- Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP said Monday it continues to expand its complex business litigation practice with the addition of five lawyers, including two partners and an associate from Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP, at its Chicago and Cleveland offices.



David S. Almeida



Manish K. Mehta

Partner David S. Almeida, with a national practice serving large institutional clients, and partner Manish K. Mehta, who serves clients in industries including computer software and pharmaceuticals, along with associate Mark S. Eisen, all three from Sheppard Mullin's Chicago office, bring to Benesch's Chicago office their experience defending class actions and litigation of intellectual property and other disputes, Cleveland-based Benesch said.

Joining them are Nick Larry, who comes to Benesch's Chicago office as an associate from Edelson PC and focuses on defending companies against class and individual actions brought under state and federal privacy and consumer protection statutes such as the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act, and Mark Norris, a former BakerHostetler lawyer who will work in the firm's Cleveland office as an associate with a focus on representing businesses in complex commercial disputes.

Almeida and Mehta told Law360 in a phone interview on Tuesday that they came to Benesch after meeting over drinks with Kal K. Shah, a friend of Mehta's and chair of Benesch's IP litigation practice. The issue of fee pressures came up, they said, and Shah told them how Benesch offered an entrepreneurial environment and had opened up a Chicago office about 18 months earlier.

"A lot of my class action clients stay with us after litigation, often working with us weekly or monthly on compliance counseling, and Benesch is able to provide alternative fee arrangements and flat fee structures post-litigation," Almeida said. "We're not just here for when something goes wrong. We're here to make sure that nothing goes wrong."

Almeida will be co-chair of Benesch's class actions practice group and chair of the TCPA practice. His practice focuses on class action defense for clients involving claims such as data breach and privacy violations, state consumer fraud and deceptive business practices, false advertising and false labeling. His clients are in the emerging technology, health care, hospitality and retail and consumer products industries.

He also runs a privacy and compliance counseling practice, with clients asking him to design and evaluate privacy policies, provide compliance counseling advice on direct marketing and mobile and electronic commerce issues, and provide training on best practices, Benesch said. Almeida received his undergraduate degree from Salisbury University and his law degree from Cornell University Law School.

Mehta's practice focuses on IP litigation, post-grant reviews, patent prosecution and counseling, with litigation experience that includes the discovery process, defending and taking depositions, preparing witnesses, drafting expert reports and pretrial preparation, Benesch said. He received his undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Illinois and his law degree from the John Marshall Law School.

"We coordinated our departures from Sheppard Mullin," Mehta said. "We share a lot of clients and have complementary practices. All my clients will be transitioning from Sheppard Mullin. The practice there was great, but Benesch is even better in terms of unique rate structures that offer clients great services at good value. The days of \$700 and \$800 per hour are gone."

Both Eisen and Larry, in addition to defending companies against TCPA and FACTA suits, also have experience litigating under the Federal Video Privacy Protection Act and Michigan Video Rental Privacy Act, along with an understanding of data breach and data privacy litigation, Benesch said.

Eisen received his undergraduate degree in political science and economics from Boston University and his law degree from Boston University School of Law. Larry received his undergraduate degree from Michigan State University Honors College and his law degree from Northwestern University School of Law.

Norris' practice focuses on representing businesses in complex commercial disputes, and he has experience with trademark and copyright litigation, employment disputes, class action defense and breach of contract actions, according to Benesch. He received his undergraduate degree in nuclear engineering technology from Thomas Edison State College and his law degree from Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

"These are exciting times for our litigation department," Benesch Litigation Chair and Firm Vice Chair Joe Castrodale said in a statement. "These attorneys are immensely talented and experienced, particularly in handling complex disputes, and will add depth to our dynamic litigation practice in Chicago, Cleveland and beyond."

Castrodale said Benesch **plans to continue adding** "high-end laterals" in the future. Benesch has a strategy of focusing its litigation practice on matters for large institutional clients, and the five new hires bring Benesch's total of new litigators to 38 in the past two years, nearly doubling the size of its litigation practice group to 81 attorneys, according to the firm.

--Editing by Orlando Lorenzo.

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