

Mintz Levin Snags Ex-Jeffer Mangels Enviro Pro In Calif.

By **Danielle Nichole Smith**

Law360 (August 15, 2018, 8:20 PM EDT) -- Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky and Popeo PC strengthened its San Francisco office with the hire of a former Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell LLP attorney who will bring to the firm his experience in dealing with California's prevailing wage statute in addition to environmental and land use law.

Jon Welner joined Mintz Levin on July 11 as a member in its real estate section after almost seven years at Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell, where he was a partner. Welner, whose hiring the firm announced Tuesday, told Law360 on Wednesday that his new firm "actually turned out to be a very easy choice" for him given its energy, growth in California and robust real estate practice in the state.



Jon Welner

He said that expects to continue to grow the practices that he's been cultivating the past several years and to work with new clients at the firm, particularly developers that operate both nationally and regionally in California.

Welner describes his practice as consisting of "three buckets" surrounding developers, building and business operating in California. He said that the first, environmental law, deals with the "alphabet soup" of agencies, laws and regulations in California. The second, land use, goes hand-in-hand with environmental law and involves getting permission to move forward with projects in the state, which has "a huge component of environmental review," he said.

The last bucket, Welner said, concerns California's prevailing wage statute, which requires workers to be paid essentially union wages as specified by the state if a project has any kind of public subsidy. His experience in those buckets is a "perfect match" for the firm's client base in California, both in real estate and in the energy and industrial fields, Welner said.

Welner — who received his undergraduate and law degrees from Stanford in 1989 and 1995, respectively — said that he always knew he would practice in the area of environmental policy and that the land use component to it was just a "natural fit." He said that his local participation in land use matters through his involvement on the planning commission in Tiburon, California, and his recent election to the town's council was also something that he enjoyed.

His work in labor dealing with California's prevailing wage laws, however, was something that he kind of just fell into, Welner said.

"I never really envisioned that I would be involved in that area of law, partly because it's not very well understood or very well known," Welner said. "But truly in California, if someone is going to engage in any kind of significant development project or construction, prevailing wage law is a huge factor."

He noted that the issue of prevailing wage has grown steadily in the past 15 years, the pace accelerating in the last few years, and has been affecting more and more projects. He also pointed to climate change as an issue that was affecting his practice area, saying that in addition to the more severe and frequent fires plaguing California, coastal communities were already experiencing the effects of rising sea levels.

"California agencies are taking a very smart and progressive approach, but also a very aggressive approach, towards dealing with the problems that are going to be caused by sea level rise, and in some cases, it's generating a lot of controversy," Welner said.

--Editing by Joe Phalon.

All Content © 2003-2018, Portfolio Media, Inc.