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## Mintz Adds 5 Ex-Squire Patton Insurance, Reinsurance Pros

By **Daphne Zhang**

Law360 (July 16, 2020, 6:35 PM EDT) -- Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky and Popeo PC has swiped three partners and two counsel from Squire Patton Boggs LLP to bolster the firm's insurance and reinsurance practice.

Former Squire Patton partners Deirdre Johnson and Paul Kalish, as well as Ellen MacDonald Farrell joined Mintz's Washington, D.C., office as members, while former partner Suman Chakraborty started working as a member in the firm's New York office. Elaine Panagakos will be a special counsel in Mintz's D.C. office.

All five attorneys started their positions on Wednesday and have been temporarily working at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are reaching a point in our practices that Paul, Deirdre, Ellen, and I have some separate clients and a lot of overlapping clients. We were looking for a platform that was really looking to grow with us," Chakraborty told Law360 on Thursday.

Chakraborty said the team's shared business has a "well-balanced portfolio" from insurance coverage work to reinsurance disputes. The group also works with insurance companies over bankruptcies and international arbitration, among others.

The team has a diverse range of clients in life insurance and property and casualty industries and expects their clients, which include Lincoln Financial Group, Allianz, Berkshire Hathaway's insurance business, Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co. and OneBeacon Insurance Group, to come with them to Mintz, according to Chakraborty.

Chakraborty said the team started looking for opportunities around February, before the pandemic.

"Finding one firm that really harmonizes what everyone is looking for can be a challenge," he said.

"There was a time when I thought maybe we should just pause and wait for COVID to go through and then make a decision on a firm. But Mintz really convinced us in the middle of all this that they were dedicated to growing and dedicated to bringing us over," Chakraborty added.

Mintz was attractive because it has an established insurance and reinsurance practice, Chakraborty said. The team was looking for an insurer side firm and expected the practice to get a lot busier during the pandemic, he said, adding that the group is looking forward to building out Mintz's insurance and reinsurance capabilities more in New York.



Deirdre Johnson



Paul Kalish



Ellen MacDonald Farrell

As the only New York-based attorney in the group, Chakraborty said he was looking for a firm that is growing its litigation bench strengths in the New York office.

"It is helpful to have a local bench of lawyers that you're working with," he added.

Chakraborty has served as lead trial counsel to large national life insurance companies in their disputes with reinsurers.

Johnson said the group's practices and Mintz's are complementary.

"Both Mintz and our group saw areas where we could help each other and build out," she said.

Johnson said the team has a personal connection to one of Mintz's members, Marc Abrams — another litigator with an insurance practice. Abrams, Chakraborty and Johnson were all associates who practiced together at LeBoeuf Lamb Greene & MacRae, one of Dewey & LeBoeuf LLP's predecessor firms.

Johnson represents companies in disputes over life reinsurance treaties and defends public corporations in class actions, securities litigation, and U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission enforcement actions. She also does litigation work with various kinds of coverage disputes, including issues involving professional liability, life and health, variable annuity, product liability and environmental matters.

"When highly accomplished lawyers such as Deirdre, Paul, Suman, Ellen, and Elaine decide to come to Mintz, we think it makes an important statement about our firm, both in terms of our growth trajectory and our exceptionally collaborative culture," said Bob Bodian, managing member of Mintz in a statement. "This group has practiced together for years with great success and complement and augment our existing capabilities."

Kalish has more than three decades of litigation experience in the insurance and financial services industries. He represents clients in coverage disputes involving tort and environmental claims, class actions related to claims handling practices, international arbitrations, and liquidations.

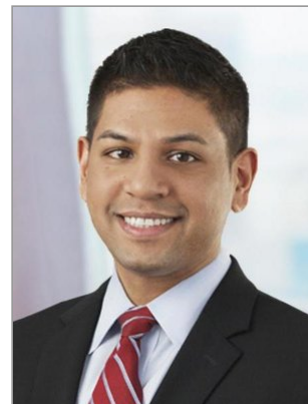
Farrell has represented clients on issues involving asbestos, environmental, financial lines, sexual assault and employment-related claims for more than 20 years. She advises clients on policy language and coverage issues and litigates complex insurance disputes.

Panagakos has worked with insurers to resolve coverage disputes in her more than 30 years of litigation practice. She has represented and advised carrier clients in cases involving coverage for allegations of misconduct by institutional policyholders.

Apart from Chakraborty, the other four attorneys stayed at Squire Patton for less than two years, arriving from Crowell & Moring LLP. Johnson and Kalish were practice leaders at Crowell & Moring when they joined Squire Patton in February 2018.

Farrell joined Squire Patton in October 2018 from an in-house role at Markel Insurance Co., while Panagakos followed them from Crowell & Moring in May 2019. Chakraborty moved to Squire Patton in April 2012, a month before his previous firm Dewey & LeBoeuf filed for bankruptcy.

--Editing by Nicole Bleier.



Suman Chakraborty



Elaine Panagakos