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COVER STORY



Daily Journal photo

Sandra Smith Thayer, left, and Kirk Pasich are leaving Dickstein Shapiro LLP for Liner LLP along with eight other attorneys. Starting Monday, Pasich will lead a newly formed insurance recovery group at Liner.

Exodus guts Dickstein Shapiro in Los Angeles

By Ashley Cullins
Daily Journal Staff Writer

A group of 10 attorneys led by prominent insurance attorney Kirk A. Pasich is leaving Dickstein Shapiro LLP for Liner LLP in Westwood, sources said Friday. The move essentially guts Dickstein's Los Angeles office, a major blow to the Washington, D.C.-based firm that is already under stress, observers say.

Effective Monday, Pasich will be leading a newly formed insurance recovery group at Liner, according to a source familiar with the matter. He is bringing with him partners Fiona Chaney, Michael Gehrt and Sandra Smith Thayer; associates Anamay Carmel, Lindsey Gilbert, Kim Umanoff and Iman Wilson; managing associate Shaun Crosner and counsel Pamela Woods.

Well known in the insurance world, Pasich and the rest of the departing group are esti-

imated to have secured more than \$5 billion in insurance recovery for clients while working for Dickstein. According to the firm's website, the departures will leave just six employees in Dickstein's L.A. office, only one of whom is in the insurance coverage group, senior managing associate Steven Inman II.

Business attorney and former firm managing partner Ed Reeser said the timing of the move could signal trouble for Dickstein.

"Mid-year is usually a tough time to leave

because the departing partners often will forfeit a portion of their accrued but unearned profit shares when they do," Reeser said. "If that is involved it usually means that someone is very unhappy and wants to leave anyway and has concluded that forfeiting the money is worth it, otherwise you'd wait."

Reeser said Pasich alone would be a big loss for Dickstein. This week's departures mark the third significant exodus from Dickstein in the last year. In 2014 Dickstein closed its offices in Palo Alto and Orange County after losing a combined seven intellectual property partners to Kaye Scholer LLP and Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP.

"It's my understanding that he is one of the largest, if not the largest, rainmakers in the firm," Reeser said. "That's going to leave a bruise."

Pasich is nationally regarded as one of the best attorneys in the business, representing major players across the entertainment industry, including the Los Angeles Lakers, in insurance and intellectual property matters. He joined Dickstein in 2005 when it acquired his litigation boutique Pasich & Kornfeld, and he became founding partner of the L.A. office, boosting the firm's insurance coverage practice to 70 attorneys nationwide.

Among his more notable cases, Pasich represented Sony in a \$100 million case against CNA insurance. He also won more than \$1 billion from insurers on behalf of client San Diego Gas & Electric following massive wildfires in Southern California.

Liner focuses on business, litigation, and real estate and has offices in downtown Los Angeles and in Westwood. The new additions to the firm will grow the firm to approximately 75 attorneys.

Representatives from Liner LLP and Dickstein Shapiro did not return requests for comment Friday afternoon.

Legal management consultant Peter Zeughauser said he hasn't talked to anyone directly involved in the move but said "a lot of people heard about it."

Zeughauser said for partners driven by high compensation there's almost always a better opportunity that can be found around the corner.

"It's rare when a firm doesn't regret losing a significant rainmaker, but it's more and more part of the business today," he said.