

Crowell & Moring Raids Bryan Cave For China Expansion

By Aebra Coe

Law360 (March 11, 2019, 4:38 PM EDT) -- Crowell & Moring has snagged 11 lawyers and professionals from Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, including the newly merged firm's entire Shanghai office, as it aims to open a new office in China and expand its global reach, the law firm announced Monday.

The new additions include four international trade and global employment lawyers in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., as well as seven trade, transactions and tax professionals in Shanghai who represent the totality of Bryan Cave's presence in the city and who will join Crowell & Moring's global policy and regulatory affairs consulting affiliate Crowell & Moring International.

The laterals join the firm as it prepares to file an application to open a law office in Shanghai, which would provide it with further capabilities to represent Chinese clients with legal matters around the world.

"Our Shanghai office, in conjunction with our Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.-based international trade teams, will provide a valuable platform to help clients access and navigate the growing market," said Ambassador Robert Holleyman, president and CEO of Crowell & Moring International and former deputy U.S. Trade Representative responsible for Asia. "This group brings a wealth of talent to our law firm's international trade group and positions us for growth in Asia."

The trade, transactions and tax professionals and attorneys who are part of the cohort moving to Crowell & Moring help companies strategize on and implement the movement of goods, services and people across borders, according to partner Evan Yee-Fan Chuck, one of the attorneys joining Crowell & Moring in Los Angeles.

The team of attorneys and non-attorney professionals have worked together for more than a decade and join their former colleague and earlier Bryan Cave-to-Crowell & Moring lateral, Los Angeles-based international trade partner David Stepp.

Chuck elaborated on the work that the team does together with the Shanghai-based professionals.

"We help companies come up with ways to optimize their global supply chain structures — and in today's turbulent trade environment — mitigate the impact of tariffs," he said. "In transactions, for example, our team helps e-commerce companies structure their businesses sourcing or selling across Asia-Pacific. We also help them understand how they can benefit from various electronic payment options."

Additionally, the team helps companies understand their cross-border options when they move their employees as part of a global supply chain strategy, and in tax they help multinational companies structure their supply chain operations.

The four lawyers joining Crowell & Moring include partners Nicole J. Simonian and Evan Yee-Fan Chuck and counsel Jackson Pai in Los Angeles and senior counsel Robert Clifton Burns in Washington, D.C.

The firm's newly expanded international trade group plans to launch an international employment and global mobility practice in the near future alongside Crowell & Moring's employment group, the firm said.

According to Chuck, Crowell & Moring's public commitment to diversity and support of LGBT rights globally was one factor that attracted the team to the firm. The group is made up of Asian, women and LGBT lawyers.

"There are a lot of things we were attracted to, but one of those things was diversity," Chuck said.

In a statement released Monday, Bryan Cave said it wished the departing attorneys and professionals well. The firm noted that while it is losing people in Shanghai, it retains a strong presence — comprised of nearly 80 fee earners — in Beijing, Hong Kong and Singapore.

"We offer our clients a range of integrated capabilities throughout the region," the statement said. "These teams regularly advise on complex cross-border transactions and matters relating to parties and interests from key markets including Japan, Indonesia, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam."

The firm said that in 2018, Bryan Cave's first financial year following the combination, revenue across the group was up 1 percent and profit per equity partner was up 5 percent.

"This positive momentum will continue to drive success across our global platform," it said.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.