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Kline & Specter Takes Pogust Millrood Name Partner as New Mass Torts Leader

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*Tobi Millrood, with Kline & Specter.
Courtesy photo.*

Kline & Specter has a new partner and leader of the mass torts department, Tobi Millrood.

The move takes place as leaders at the firm alter their approach to handling mass tort cases.

Millrood's old firm is slated to combine with a global practice.

Kline & Specter has a new partner and mass tort department chair in Tobias “Tobi” Millrood, one-half of the name partners at Conshohocken-based firm Pogust Millrood.

Millrood replaces current chair Lee Balefsky this week after Balefsky served in the role for 18 years, leaders at the Philadelphia-based personal injury firm said Monday.

As the 2020-2021 president of the American Association for Justice, Millrood was initially contacted by Balefsky after advising his colleagues at Kline & Specter this summer of his plans to step away from his duties as head of the mass tort department, firm leaders said Monday. But that conversation shifted toward discussing whether Millrood was himself the right fit.

“My home stadium is the courtroom where I try cases, and there’s no better place to do that than at Kline & Specter,” Millrood said. “When the opportunity presented itself, it was too good to pass up.”

The move also comes as Pogust Millrood gears up to expand internationally through a merger into global firm PGMBM, according to leaders at the five-lawyer firm. With approximately 100 lawyers and 500 professional staff, the global firm has offices in the U.S., U.K., Brazil and Amsterdam.

The Competitive Landscape is Changing

Name partner Harris Pogust said the goal with the PGMBM platform is to “take what we’ve learned here over the last 30 years and start it in various countries,” where he said the mass torts bar is “pretty immature.”

Shanin Specter, a founding partner of Kline & Specter, said he “just about fell out of [his] chair” upon learning that Millrood wanted to join the firm. He said he saw an “obvious synergy” between Millrood’s position as “probably the most well-liked and well-respected trial lawyer-leader in the country” and Kline & Specter’s existing resources and reputation.

Millrood has successfully tried medical and prescription drug cases against Wyeth and Pfizer in hormone therapy litigation. In total, Millrood tried four hormone therapy cases, including the nation’s first in 2002,

resulting in winning jury verdicts for all four, including those of \$72.6 million and \$34.3 million from Pfizer, online court records show. He also served on the plaintiff's executive committee in the Prempro multidistrict litigation.

He was also appointed co-lead in the Pennsylvania opioid litigation, Delaware County v. Purdue Pharma, and he has served in other court-appointed leadership positions, including the plaintiffs' steering committees of In re Stryker Rejuvenate Hip Stem and ABG Modular Hip Litigation and In re Consolidated Fresenius Cases.

Millrood said his clients aren't joining him at Kline & Specter because he and the Pogust Millrood leadership agreed it was better to allow their cases to be handled by the team at his prior firm for the sake of "continuity of care for those clients."

Specter added that Kline & Specter "wanted Tobi for Tobi and not for his book of business."

Specter said firm leaders have transitioned from assigning mass tort cases exclusively to the department to instead having all lawyers be available to handle mass tort cases.

"We want front-line trial lawyers to be managing these cases as opposed to their conglomeration into a package with an eye to resolution," he explained. "That has been our approach to the mass tort practice because we do regard these cases as binary: plaintiff A versus company B and not 2,000 plaintiffs versus company B."

Millrood said he shares a vision with leaders of Kline & Specter when it comes to trying personal injury cases, to treat cases in which a person is injured by defective drugs and devices "just like any other complex injury

case,” keeping an eye toward trial. He said Pogust has a “proud history” of continuing to fight on cases even after many other counsel settled out.

“We just felt like there wasn’t just compensation for our clients and we would continue to fight until there was just compensation,” Millrood said. “Kline & Specter gives me the opportunity to continue fighting these types of cases.”

By all accounts, Millrood’s separation from Pogust Millrood was amicable. He joined the firm in 2008, expanding its presence in pharmaceutical litigation, according to the firm’s website. His recent move leaves Pogust Millrood short one-half of its name partners, but leaders at both firms said they plan to continue to collaborate.

“I’m sure we’ll refer client work back and forth,” Pogust said. “Those guys [at Kline & Specter] are amazing lawyers, and now they have Tobi who’s amazing.”

Leaders at Pogust Millrood said firm partner Michael Daly is poised to take over many of the leadership duties Millrood leaves behind.