

LOS ANGELES

# Daily Journal

THURSDAY,  
MARCH 16, 2006  
VOL. 119 NO. 51

© 2006 DAILY JOURNAL CORPORATION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

SINCE 1888

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT AND UNITED STATES SOUTHERN DISTRICT COURT

www.dailyjournal.com

915 EAST FIRST STREET, LOS ANGELES, CA 90012 (213) 229-5300

\$2.50

## L.A. Law Firm Combines With McGuireWoods

### Van Etten Suzumoto Gets Broader Platform And National Presence

By Drew Combs  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Another local law firm has succumbed to the siren call of a larger national firm.

Los Angeles-based law firm Van Etten Suzumoto & Becket is merging with McGuireWoods of Richmond, Va, leaders of both firms said Wednesday.

"We have gotten to the stage where we need a broader platform and a presence in other parts of the country," said David Van Etten, managing partner of the 40-attorney Van Etten Suzumoto.

The firm, which recently moved into offices in Century City, was founded in 1996 by three lawyers from what was then Pillsbury Madison & Sutro and is today Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman. Van Etten Suzumoto has grown to 40 lawyers across 12 practice areas. The firm's core practice areas are real estate transactions and complex business litigation.

Throughout its history and especially in recent years, Van Etten Suzumoto has added prominent lawyers fleeing larger national and regional firms, such as Eliot Disner from Manatt Phelps & Phillips and Marilyn Barrett of Alschuler Grossman Stein & Kahn, but ultimately decided it needed to be part of a national practice.

"The nature of the practice is changing so that in order to snag the big clients very often you are required to compete with other law firms," said Lyndon J. Parker, the Los Angeles-based managing director for the legal recruiting firm Mestel & Co. "A law firm will find itself on the losing end of a lot of beauty contests, not withstanding that it may be less expensive, if it does not have national reach."

But this sort of pressure is not felt solely by small regional firms.

Robert L. Burrus Jr., chairman of McGuireWoods, said clients doing business in Southern California prompted firm management to seek out a presence in the Los Angeles market.

McGuireWoods has 750 lawyers in 13 domestic offices and two international offices.

"We do see consolidation in the industry as a major factor," Burrus said, "but we do mergers to serve our clients, not to be in a new city."

When the combination with Van Etten Suzumoto is completed in a few months, it will mark McGuireWoods' second merger this year.

In February, McGuireWoods completed a merger with Chicago-based Gordon & Glickson.

The acquisition of Van Etten Suzumoto comes a year after McGuireWoods opened a small office in Los Angeles. The three litigators it staffs will move into Van Etten Suzumoto's Century City location.

Burrus said that since the merger was announced, he has received calls from several clients, whom he declined to name, praising the greater flexibility the move provides the firm.

According to Van Etten, his firm has had talks with several suitors but decided to merge with McGuireWoods "because at the end of the process we felt this was the best fit in terms of practice area and workplace culture."

Additionally, Van Etten said his firm has served as local counsel for McGuireWoods in the past and there existed a familiarity between partners at both firms.

All of Van Etten Suzumoto's 16 partners will join McGuireWoods as partners.

"This office will operate in the same way it has operated previously," Van Etten said. "The day-to-day experience and the intimacy you have in a smaller firm will be preserved, but granted there will be some differences."