

Cozen O'Connor Continues to Build its Construction Practice in California, Landing Veteran Litigator J. Michael Schiff

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SAN DIEGO, August 5, 2024 — As part of its ongoing expansion into California, Cozen O'Connor is pleased to announce seasoned construction industry litigator J. Michael Schiff — who brings a 14-plus year track record of representing clients in high-profile disputes involving infrastructure, industrial and multifamily projects, retail centers, hotels, and office parks — has joined its award-winning Construction practice.

Schiff, who comes to the firm from Andrews Myers, will reside in Cozen O'Connor's San Diego office. He is the seventh construction attorney to take up residence in California this year, joining Marion T. Hack, Luke Nicholas Eaton, Michelle Rosenberg, John H. Conrad, Cindy J. Lee, and Venessa Drake, who moved from Troutman Pepper to the firm's Los Angeles office in March.

Previously based in Houston, Schiff's new responsibilities are two-fold: he will help expand Cozen O'Connor's Construction practice in southern California, while also continuing to work with his long-standing clients based in Texas, thereby expanding Cozen O'Connor's construction litigation footprint in both states.

Schiff focuses primarily on construction litigation, alternative dispute resolution, litigation avoidance and construction transactions for an array of clients across all construction industry sectors, both domestic and international. He represents suppliers, subcontractors, general contractors, and project owners in state and federal court, and before the American Arbitration Association, CPR arbitration, and in International Chamber of Commerce arbitrations.

"As an experienced litigator, Mike has worked on pretty much every type of construction project there is, including public infrastructure, private development, and industrial operations," said Bruce W. Ficken, co-chair of Cozen O'Connor's Construction Law group. "Further, he's represented clients across the industry's value chain, from owners to general contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers, both domestic and international. He's the perfect choice to help us further expand our client base and, as importantly, he is an amazing fit with the culture and professionalism of our group."

"As a veteran of the Texas construction bar, Mike brings to us deep relationships with that state's counsel, mediators, arbitrators, and judges, giving him a significant advantage when it comes to navigating disputes there," said Hack. "From a macro standpoint, he knows the industry, the various players, its culture, and economics, and its many, many stumbling blocks. He's ideally suited to help grow our practice in both Texas and California. I'm thrilled to welcome him to our group."

A long-time member of the Associated Builders and Contractors and The Associated General Contractors of America/Construction Leadership Council, Schiff regularly handles matters related to payment disputes, multiparty design and/or defect disputes, mechanics liens, performance and payment bonds, undisclosed and differing site conditions, breach of contract, delay claims, owner interference, and contract termination. As a result, clients often engage him to draft, review and negotiate construction contracts on their behalf.

His practice is often international in scope. Most recently, Schiff defended a Spanish civil contractor in a complex, years-long multiparty indemnity claim involving highway construction in both state and federal courts and in ICC and CPR arbitration, reducing the client's liability from more than \$600 million to a settlement of less than one percent of the original claim. He also successfully defended a

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Chinese electrical contractor against a claim from its Canadian subcontractor involving a large automotive plant, reducing the claim to its original uncontested amount in mediation.

“I chose Cozen O’Connor for the unique combination of its resources and its culture. Every interview felt like a conversation with new friends and collaborators, making it the perfect environment for personal and professional growth,” Schiff said. “For my clients, I’ve proven I can respond and provide value regardless of where in the country or world their needs arise, and I have full access to the firm’s many legal resources — including counsel in real estate, employment, insurance, and contracts.”

Schiff earned his J.D. at the University of Houston Law Center, and his B.A. at Texas State University.

About Cozen O’Connor

Established in 1970, Cozen O’Connor has over 925 attorneys who help clients manage risk and make better business decisions. The firm counsels clients on their most sophisticated legal matters in all areas of the law, including litigation, corporate, and regulatory law. Representing a broad array of leading global corporations and middle market companies, Cozen O’Connor serves its clients’ needs through 33 offices across two continents.

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