

## Husch Blackwell Bolsters California Employment Law Practice

By James Mills

*Law360 (July 7, 2022, 4:45 PM EDT)* -- Husch Blackwell LLP is boosting its California presence by bringing in four labor and employment attorneys to its year-old Oakland and Los Angeles offices.

Tyler Paetkau, who spent the past five years at Procopio Cory Hargreaves & Savitch LLP, joins as a partner in the labor and employment practice group, Husch Blackwell announced on Wednesday. He will be affiliated with the firm's Oakland office, but working primarily with the Husch Blackwell virtual office, known as "the link."



Tyler Paetkau

Additionally, Olga Savage joins as a senior counsel in the Oakland office. Savage and Paetkau have worked as a team for 13 years. Also joining are senior associate Allison Scott and associate Michael Matta, both of whom will be based in the Los Angeles office.

"When we opened our new offices last year in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area, our intention was to build upon those initial efforts by adding capabilities that correspond with client demand," Husch Blackwell chair Catherine Hanaway said in a statement. "Labor and employment law was at the top of our list, and I'm very pleased that we have been able to put together such a strong team in short order."

Erik Eisenmann, the head of Husch Blackwell's labor and employment practice, said he was glad to have the new hires.

"California labor and employment law is complex, and the state's economy is immense. To have a truly national labor and employment law group, you have to be able to counsel clients with respect to all the challenges California law presents," Eisenmann said in a statement. "Our new colleagues accomplish that for us, and we'll look to add talented practitioners to the team as the opportunities arise."

Founded in 1916 in Kansas City, Missouri, Husch Blackwell now has over 800 attorneys in 22 offices nationwide. Its virtual office, started in June 2020 with 50 attorneys and staffers, now has over 170 attorneys.

During a Thursday morning interview, Paetkau told Law360 Pulse that he's excited to have joined.

"I had been in a San Diego-based firm for about five years. I was pretty content but it's always good to look around and see what's out there," Paetkau said. "California already has a lot of clients and business

here. So, it was just a really good fit. The emphasis on labor and employment was a plus. Just the breadth of the firm across 20 plus offices, pretty much we can cover almost anything in any state, was really attractive."

He handles wrongful termination, discrimination, retaliation, sexual harassment and defamation cases as well as wage and hour violations, unpaid commissions, collective and class actions, and unfair labor practice charges. Paetkau also handles trade secrets, restrictive covenants and employee mobility issues.

A 1990 University of Michigan Law School graduate, Paetkau said he enjoyed employment law because he liked helping people.

"I wanted to be a lawyer from the time I was about 5 years old. I liked even then to argue. I like to play the devil's advocate and be the contrarian," he said. "I like labor and employment because you deal with people. Each case is kind of a soap opera. I joke with my colleagues: if I could write a book on every little soap opera, it would be compelling, but I'd worry about attorney-client privilege. What people will do and human nature being what it is, nothing surprises me anymore. Really the thread through all that is dealing with people and human emotions and what that brings with it. I enjoy that."

He is especially impressed by the link, calling it "innovative," and is glad to be working in it.

"It's another thing where Husch was ahead of the curve. Even before the pandemic, people were already working remotely in the link. It seems like we have remote attorneys in every major city, even if we don't have a physical office there. That was really attractive to me."

Savage is a 2007 graduate of Stanford Law School who represents employers in individual and class action lawsuits, arbitrations and litigation involving claims of trade secret misappropriation, unfair competition and restrictive covenants. She and Paetkau have worked together since 2009, when she joined his firm Hartnett Smith & Paetkau. They then moved to Procopio as a team in 2017.

Paetkau and Savage also brought paralegal Yveline Coulond with them to Husch Blackwell as part of their team.

Allison Scott spent the past three years at Dykema Gossett PLLC. She is a 2015 graduate of Chapman University's Dale E. Fowler School of Law who focuses on employment litigation and counseling matters. She handles single-plaintiff discrimination, harassment, retaliation and wrongful termination claims, wage and hour class actions, and Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility claims and premises liability.

Michael Matta, whose previous job was at the personal injury and employment litigation boutique Chami Law PC, is a 2018 graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles School of Law who focuses on employment litigation. He has experience with single-plaintiff cases that involve allegations of wrongful termination, discrimination, retaliation or harassment, as well as wage and hour disputes.

--Editing by Karin Roberts.