

Montgomery McCracken Taps 2 Ballard Spahr Labor Attys

By Dan Packel

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Montgomery McCracken Walker & Rhoads LLP announced Friday it has lured back two attorneys who started their careers at the Philadelphia-based firm to lead the labor and employment practice, after 15 years at Ballard Spahr LLP.

Frank Chernak, who started at Montgomery McCracken in 1989, will chair the practice group, while William Kennedy, who started at the firm in 2000, will serve as vice chair. Both left for Ballard Spahr in 2002, as part of a mass departure of the entire labor and employment group.

But both attorneys said they maintained close relationships with colleagues at Montgomery McCracken, and Chernak was especially intrigued when he saw that his friend Rick Simins — who'd had an almost identical tenure at the firm — had himself returned to it from Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC.

“I talked to him about it, and he was very excited about the culture and the entrepreneurial spirit that was in place,” Chernak said.

Chernak then started talking to Kennedy, who was a second-year associate when he left the firm but had maintained relationships with a number of attorneys his age, and both began to seriously entertain the prospect of returning.

Montgomery McCracken Chairman Louis Petroni said he was thrilled when he found out he would have the opportunity to bring the pair back on board.

“They are stellar attorneys, with the right attitude, right energy, and right experience, at a time when we are ready to continue with our takeoff,” he said. “It didn’t take any prodding for me to have discussions with my other partners about Frank and Bill coming back.”

Chernak has substantial trial experience at the state and federal levels representing employers against civil rights and employment claims. He also handles work at the appellate level, and recently argued a Fair Labor Standards Act case involving 33 deputy sheriffs who sought overtime compensation for time spent waiting on call before the Third Circuit.



Frank Chernak



William Kennedy

He also served as a lieutenant colonel in the United States Air Force, active duty and reserves, and flew 47 company support missions on the Arabian Peninsula during Desert Storm. He now provides pro bono work for various veteran organizations.

Kennedy also represents management in a wide variety of employment litigation, and has trial experience in cases involving Title VII, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and First Amendment retaliation.

He served as counsel to the Democratic National Convention Committee and Philadelphia 2016 Host Committee, where he negotiated a project labor agreement with representatives of the Philadelphia Building and Construction Trades Council and individual unions handling construction, production and decoration work for the 2016 convention.

Both attorneys said they are thrilled to be back on board.

"It's a firm full of people I respect and enjoy being around. They have an entrepreneurial spirit, with a creative approach to law and to doing business," Kennedy said. "The firm is really committed to the growth of this practice area. It's just something I didn't want to miss out on."

Mark Stewart, chairman of Ballard Spahr LLP, said the two are "good friends and good lawyers, and we wish them success."

--Editing by Marygrace Murphy.