

October 10, 2019

Michael Best Expands Austin Office with Two Investment Management Attorneys

Michael Best is pleased to announce the additions of Marianne S. Dwight and Sharmila “Shar” Kassam to the firm’s Transactions Practice Group, both of whom will hold the position of counsel in the Austin office.

“The volume of deals in the Austin tech and venture markets are booming,” said Hamang Patel, Chair of Michael Best’s Corporate Practice Group. “Having local talent like Marianne and Shar is critical to providing legal counsel and business solutions to our clients’ corporate, venture capital and private equity needs in challenging markets. We’re thrilled that they have joined us, and I’m confident they will be valuable assets to our team in Austin and across the nation.”

The additions of Dwight and Kassam meet both the business strategy and legal needs for investment managers and investors across the country. Leveraging from the firm’s robust transactions practice, the two will provide a unique business consulting offering a suite of advisory services to investment fund managers, including minority and women managers addressing a gap in the industry on alignment by bridging perspectives of investors and managers. Dwight and Kassam utilize their experience of business operations and allocator focus to advise investment managers in a full service manner, complimenting the firm’s nationwide practice.

For more than two decades, Dwight has advised clients in the public and private sectors through various transactional matters across multiple asset classes, including fund formation, financing and offerings, private real estate fund formations and joint ventures. She provides counsel on general corporate and risk management matters in connection with portfolio and investment structuring, compliance and due diligence, including exit transactions, among other regulatory, insurance, and legislative concerns.

Before joining Michael Best, Dwight served on the investment committee and as general counsel for the Texas Treasury Safekeeping Trust Company with more than \$65B of assets

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under management and where she participated in overseeing the operations, management, and investment decisions. She has also held a number of other high-profile positions in Texas state government, including general counsel for the Commissioner of Insurance, general counsel to the state Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, and assistant attorney general for tax, financial, and related cases. Throughout her career, Dwight has worked for and with the Texas Legislature focusing on healthcare, investing public money and financing projects for the state such as water.

Outside of her business roles, Dwight is involved in several non-profits including the Firefly Fund, Affordable Central Texas and LLILAS Benson (the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies and Benson Library). Additionally, Dwight is a member of New America Alliance (NAA), Private Equity Women Investor Network (PEWIN), and Texas Wall Street Women.

Kassam advises on investment and transaction structures, asset allocations and asset management. She has over 20 years of experience implementing creative investment structures, and investment counseling on risk management in a variety of capacities including operational, financial and political risk. Her investment and legal expertise are across multiple asset classes including private equity, private credit, venture, hedge funds and infrastructure.

Kassam previously served for over a decade as the Deputy Chief Investment Officer for the Employee Retirement System of Texas, a government pension plan sponsor with assets valued at over \$28 billion. In this role, Kassam managed the organization's investment program and team alongside the Chief Investment Officer while she led a successful \$1 billion emerging manager program, with innovations like a manager seeding platforms, and championing pension and investment governance. She also frequently worked with the legislature and testified before her Board on a regular basis and the Texas Legislature regarding the investment program. She is a global speaker on pensions and investment management in the investment industry.

Dwight received her J.D. from Southern Methodist University, her M.A from St. Edward's University, and her B.B.A. in accounting, with honors, from Texas A&M University. Kassam received her J.D. from The University of Texas School of Law and her B.B.A. in accounting, with honors, from The University of Texas.

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