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## O'Melveny Signs On as Sponsor of Civil Rights Group

By DREW COMBS - 9/24/2007

Los Angeles Business Journal Staff

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund announced last week that the law firm O'Melveny & Myers LLP has become a national sponsor of the organization, marking a first of its kind union for the Los Angeles-based civil rights group.

As part of the sponsorship, attorneys at both O'Melveny & Myers and Maldef will maintain a "systematic relationship," allowing for a more seamless integration of firm attorneys in cases and emergency orders sought by Maldef, said John Trasviña, president and general counsel of the organization.

Trasviña added, "This fits into our goal to increase our litigation capacity and continue to be at the cutting edge of important cases for the Latino community."

Additionally, O'Melveny & Myers will participate in Maldef's mentor program and serve as a chair of the organization's annual dinner that will take place next month in Century City.

"The firm played an important part in our recent Supreme Court victory and so it was logical to turn to O'Melveny & Myers to kick off this program," Trasviña said.

Last year, O'Melveny lawyers assisted Maldef lawyers challenging a Texas congressional redistricting plan for discriminating against Latinos. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately ruled in favor of Maldef, striking down the plan.

"We have a strong relationship with the organization but wanted to strengthen that relationship," said O'Melveny & Myers partner Michael Camuñez. "This is really a convergence of our diversity and pro bono commitment as a firm. We encourage our lawyers to get out there in the real world and work with approved partners like Maldef."

While announced in Los Angeles, the program will have a national focus and involve Maldef's regional offices and O'Melveny & Myers offices in other cities.

Maldef, which was founded in 1968, advocates on behalf of the nation's Latino community primarily through educational outreach, lobbying and litigation.

### The Name Game

What's in a name? When it comes to law firms, this question has a simple answer: a lot. Smaller firms have been known to break up over naming issues, for example when one partner who has grown in prestige seeks to have that increased stature reflected in the firm's title and is opposed by other partners at the firm.

And some firms essentially avoid this debate all together by liberally adding last names to their title. The title of one prominent Beverly Hills entertainment firm is 10 names long.

At larger firms the importance of names is most evident during mergers. Each side of the proposed merger, as well as the broader legal community, looks to the resulting name as some indication of which firm negotiated from the stronger position.

But some firms have ditched the combination of last names all together in an effort to distinguish themselves.

Arts and Technology Law Group, a San Francisco-based firm that focuses on representing clients in the video game, web content and entertainment industries, recently opened an office in Santa Monica. It joins a southern California legal marketplace that already includes firms named SoCal IP Group LLP, Strategic Counsel PLC and Coast Law Group LLP.

"The name allows me to tell perspective clients, opposing counsel and the market place the areas I am trying to address," said Gregory Rutchik, founding attorney at Arts and Technology Law Group. "I want to be very clear about what our focus is."

Other lawyers practicing at firms lacking in last names, expressed a similar desire to distinguish themselves and make clear the services they provide.

“We are using a name that makes it more readily apparent the services we offer, which in my opinion is better than a list of surnames that don’t really say anything,” said Mark Goldstein, an attorney at SoCal IP Group.

The law firm, which has offices in Westlake Village and Irvine, represents clients in wide variety of intellectual property related matters including patent preparation and trademark filing.

While branding and naming experts doubted there would be any monumental shift away from last names in the legal industry, they said these examples spoke to a nascent trend.

“The legal profession is perhaps the most conservative when it comes to marketing savvy. They still prefer Draconian long names and expensive stationary,” said Naseem Javed, a New York-based branding and naming expert. “These firms that have resisted this practice demonstrate that lawyers too have felt the pressure to stand out in a world dominated by search engines.”

But Oakland-based branding consultant Laurel Sutton said, the advantage law firms gain with these “modern” names could be lost if too many other lawyers adopt them.

And Rutchik, of the Arts and Technology Group, has prepared for just that scenario. “I have trademarked my firm’s name to prevent others from using it to offer similar services,” he said.

### **Outpost West**

The law firm WilmerHale LLP, with roots in Boston and Washington, D.C., announced last week the opening of a Los Angeles office and the addition of Randall Lee, former regional director in Los Angeles of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, who will base his practice in the newly established West Coast outpost.

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