Latham Nabs Prosecutors From Avenatti, SF Bribery Cases

By **Rachel Scharf**

Law360 (January 5, 2022, 12:55 PM EST) -- Latham & Watkins LLP rang in 2022 by bulking up its California white collar capabilities, hiring one former assistant U.S. attorney fresh off the trial of embattled attorney Michael Avenatti and another who helped investigate public corruption in San Francisco.

Alex Wyman and Scott Joiner join Latham as partners in its white collar defense and investigations practice after five and seven years, respectively, investigating and prosecuting corporate and securities fraud for the U.S. attorney's offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

In a Tuesday interview with Law360, both lawyers said they were drawn to Latham for the opportunity to work with some of the world's top attorneys on cutting-edge legal questions.

"Latham's global platform and the ability for clients to seamlessly access the wealth of experience and expertise that the lawyers at Latham bring is, I think, second to none," said Joiner, who will be based in the firm's Bay Area office.

Joiner and Wyman said they're excited to serve Latham's clients with the criminal trial experience they honed as prosecutors. But the two attorneys, who both got their start in private practice, also said they look forward to applying their expertise to civil matters.

Scott Joiner

Alex Wyman

"Going back to private practice provided an opportunity to diversify my practice," said Wyman, who began his career at O'Melveny & Myers LLP. "I wanted to continue doing criminal litigation and investigations work, but Latham gave me the opportunity to leverage my trial experience into civil litigation as well."

Joiner came to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of California in 2014 after nearly seven years at Cooley LLP. He first focused on prosecuting organized crime and later joined the office's corporate and securities fraud section.

Joiner found himself applying both areas of expertise recently while tackling a large-scale bribery investigation into San Francisco's local government. The probe is still in progress, but the government has secured guilty pleas from officials including former public works director Mohammed Nuru and a

$36 million settlement from trash hauling company Recology Inc.

Joiner said it was a difficult decision to leave the U.S. attorney's office before the matter had concluded. But his work at Latham will be informed by all that he learned conducting such a significant public corruption investigation, he said.

"The experience gained in that kind of investigation and the high-profile nature of it is going to be invaluable as I bring it to bear representing Latham's clients," Joiner said.

Wyman, meanwhile, is headed to Latham's Los Angeles office after five years as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Central District of California's Major Frauds Section, where he served as both securities investment fraud coordinator and corporate fraud coordinator.

Wyman co-led eight trials at the federal prosecutor's office, including the recent jury trial of Avenatti on charges that he stole millions from unsuspecting clients. A judge declared a mistrial in August after finding that the government failed to turn over potential exculpatory evidence.

"Trial experience is difficult to come by, and it's something you get in spades when you go to work at the U.S. attorney's office," said Wyman, who declined to comment on the ongoing Avenatti case. "I was fortunate to have a really interesting and sophisticated trial experience, and that's one thing I think I can bring to Latham."

Wyman received his law degree from University of Virginia School of Law and clerked for U.S. District Judge Beverly Reid O'Connell. Joiner earned his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center and spent four years in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served as a judge advocate.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.