Former Asst. US Attorney Steve Welk Joins Steptoe in Los Angeles

September 15, 2021

Overview
(September 15, 2021, Los Angeles) — Steptoe & Johnson LLP is pleased to announce that former Assistant US Attorney Steve Welk has joined the firm’s Investigations and White-Collar Defense Group as senior counsel in the Los Angeles office. Welk brings considerable knowledge of and experience in federal asset forfeiture and money laundering law and practice in the United States.

For the past 20 years, Welk has served as chief of the Asset Forfeiture Section of the US Attorney’s Office for the Central District of California, managing a Criminal Division senior section with an average case load of approximately 400 cases. Welk first joined the section in 1995, and as an assistant US attorney, has participated in approximately 25 federal jury and bench trials. He’s also briefed 37 appeals before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, argued 19, and acted as brief reviewer for approximately 40 additional appeals.

Some of Welk’s more recent work includes the 2020 1MDB kleptocracy cases, in which he led the litigation team that orchestrated the seizure and forfeiture of more than $1.4 billion dollars’ worth of cash, real estate and personal property located in the United States and abroad, traceable to the looting of the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund. In 2019, Welk led the government’s successful case in United States v. Mongol Nation, obtaining guilty verdicts on all counts following a two-and-a-half-month jury trial of substantive RICO and RICO conspiracy charges against the Mongols outlaw motorcycle gang (OMG), marking the first such conviction of an OMG.

Welk has extensive experience in forfeiture law and procedure, money laundering, and financial investigations. Since 2000, he has served as a member of the Department of Justice Asset Forfeiture Working Group, crafting and implementing government forfeiture and money laundering policy, and providing ad hoc guidance for the assistant US attorneys working in the Asset Forfeiture Program in the 94 federal districts.

Steptoe Chair Phil West commented: “Steve is another talented addition to our global cross-border investigations and white-collar defense practice in the US, Europe, and Asia, which, in the US, include a number of former federal prosecutors.”

Welk added: “Steptoe has long been recognized as a premiere firm for investigations and white-collar defense. I’m excited to be joining the firm and looking forward to reuniting with my former AUSA colleague Ashwin Ram in LA as we further build out the white-collar team on the West Coast.”

Steptoe’s Investigations & White-Collar Defense practice has represented some of the largest public and private companies in the world in major government and internal investigations. Regarded as one of the best white-collar practices in the United States, the team has garnered many accolades, including recognition by both Chambers USA and The Legal 500 as a top-ranked practice in this field. The group was also named The National Law Journal’s “Washington Litigation Department of the Year in White-Collar Crime” in 2014, 2017, and 2018, and has received Law360’s “Practice Group of the Year in White-Collar” award three times. For the past six years, Global Investigations Review has named Steptoe to its GIR 30, an independent guide to the world’s best firms for international investigations.

Welk earned his law degree from Pepperdine University and his bachelor’s degree from the University of Southern California.
About Steptoe

In more than 100 years of practice, Steptoe has earned an international reputation for vigorous representation of clients before governmental agencies, successful advocacy in litigation and arbitration, and creative and practical advice in structuring business transactions. Steptoe has more than 500 lawyers and other professional staff across offices in Beijing, Brussels, Chicago, Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington. For more information, visit www.steptoe.com.

Practices

White-Collar Defense

Independent & Internal Investigations