

McKool Smith Adds Ex-Vinson & Elkins IP Litigation Pro

By Kurt Orzeck

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McKool Smith PC has added a seasoned patent trial litigator to serve as a principal with a dual assignment in its Houston and Washington, D.C., offices, after he spent nearly 42 years working at Vinson & Elkins LLP, McKool Smith announced on Monday.

At McKool Smith, William "Bill" LaFuze will handle a wide range of intellectual property law issues, with a particular focus on patent litigation in the smartphone, computer, electronics, oilfield equipment, telecommunications and Internet-related fields, the firm said. LaFuze's clients have included Chesapeake Energy Co., Motorola Corp., The Coca-Cola Co., Halliburton Co. and Harley-Davidson Inc., among others, his new employer said.



William LaFuze

LaFuze was selected as one of two IP lawyers to advise former President George W. Bush's administration in its presidential transition team on patent policy, the operation of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and patent reform issues, according to McKool Smith. By appointment of the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, he later served on the Patent Public Advisory Committee of the USPTO.

Mike McKool, a founder and chairman of McKool Smith, said in a Monday statement that LaFuze is considered to be one of the best patent litigators in the U.S.

"I have always admired him and his abilities, and have no doubt that he will make an excellent addition to the firm," McKool said. "I'm looking forward to working and trying cases with him. Our clients will certainly benefit from his skills and expertise."

According to LaFuze, his new firm has one of the pre-eminent patent litigation practices in the country.

"I believe the firm's deep bench of first-chair trial lawyers is what truly distinguishes McKool Smith from others," LaFuze said in a Monday statement. "Add to that the firm's stellar reputation for winning massive patent infringement verdicts and defending industry-leading companies in important cases of high commercial value, and you have the makings of a true patent litigation powerhouse."

Over the last eight years, McKool Smith has landed eight nine-figure patent infringement verdicts, more

than any other firm, it says.

LaFuze has represented clients in many district courts and in Federal Circuit appeals, according to his new employer. He has also served as arbitrator in many IP cases, and has significant experience in IP strategic counseling and licensing.

LaFuze earned a BS in physics with highest honors from the University of Texas in 1969, then an MS in applied science systems engineering from Southern Methodist University two years later, according to his McKool Smith biography. He notched his JD from the University of Texas School of Law in 1973.

That same year, he joined Vinson & Elkins' IP, according to his LinkedIn profile. LaFuze served as a partner in the firm's practice group, and led or co-led Vinson & Elkins' firmwide IP practice group for many years, McKool Smith said.

LaFuze currently serves as an officer of the American Bar Association Section of Intellectual Property Law and is a delegate from that section to the ABA House of Delegates, according to McKool Smith. He previously served as president of the American Intellectual Property Law Association and chair of the ABA Section on Intellectual Property Law.

He has testified multiple times in hearings before congressional committees and the USPTO with regard to patent law reform issues, McKool Smith added.

Among McKool Smith's other patent pros is Josh Budwin, who earned a spot on Law360's recent list of Rising Stars after helping the firm secure three massive, nine-figure patent verdicts for ParkerVision Inc., Versata Software Inc. and Medtronic PLC totaling more than \$768 million over the past seven years.

McKool Smith employs more than 180 trial lawyers in its offices in eight cities, including Houston, D.C., Los Angeles and New York. In addition to IP, the firm represents clients in complex commercial litigation, bankruptcy and white collar defense matters.

--Additional reporting by Kelly Knaub. Editing by Stephen Berg.