

Citing High Demand in L&E, Meyers Nave Inks Merger Deal With San Diego Boutique

Janice Brown, the founder of Brown Law Group, a woman-owned and minority-owned firm, said she is impressed by Meyers Nave's commitment to inclusion.

By Brenda Sapino Jeffreys

Midsize California firm Meyers Nave Riback Silver & Wilson will merge with San Diego boutique Brown Law Group, led by litigator Janice Brown, boosting the firm's labor and employment practice at a time when COVID-19 has created a demand for that expertise.

David Skinner, managing principal of Meyers Nave,



Shutterstock

Downtown San Diego, California.



Janice Brown

Courtesy Photo

said the firm has been looking to expand its labor and employment team because of increased demand stemming

not only from the coronavirus pandemic but also the #MeToo movement and social justice issues.

“Janice and her team bring significant experience and depth in litigation and also [experience] in Southern California,” Skinner said. “With Janice and her team, particularly the litigation depth, it’s a win-win for everybody.”

The firms will officially combine Oct. 1, but Skinner said

they announced the deal Monday because they figured the word would get out. The combination has been in the works since January, when Skinner reached out to Brown.

“It came at the right time and in the right way,” Brown said. “I’ve had my own firm, a Black-owned, woman-owned firm with big clients and small clients for 20 years. The stars that aligned were a combination of things,” she said

She said her firm has been busy, and she was looking for a larger platform than her eight-lawyer boutique.

Over the years, Brown said, large firms have approached her about combining, but it was important to her that any merger partner would be dedicated to diversity. And she determined during her first face-to-face meeting with Meyers Nave leadership back in February that the firm was truly committed. That meeting also included two members of leadership at Meyers Nave who are Black lawyers—Camille Hamilton Pating, chair of the labor and employment and workplace investigations practices, and Eric Casher, chair of the firm’s diversity committee and municipal and special district law practice—as well as Deborah Fox, the chair of the first amendment and trial and litigation practices.

“I feel like this is the best opportunity I can find to be

affiliated with a firm with a commitment [to diversity] expressed not only in words but in deed,” Brown said. About 60% of Meyers Nave’s lawyers are women or minorities.

Pating said Brown is more than a seasoned employment litigator who built her own firm.

“She is a leader. She is a role model, a mentor in teaching and developing attorneys into top-level practitioners like herself. That is exactly the ... kind of law partner I wanted,” Pating said.

Brown, who founded Brown Law Group in 1999, is a past board member of the Minority Corporate Counsel Association and the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms, and the immediate past chair of the board of directors of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation.

Brown said her clients include the Los Angeles Chargers professional football team;

Jerome’s Furniture Warehouse, a chain of furniture stores based in San Diego; and Allstate Insurance.

The addition of Brown and her group comes after Meyers Nave lost Gina Roccanova, the former chair of its labor and employment practice, who joined Jackson Lewis in July 2019 in San Francisco. Meyers Nave has offices in Oakland, Santa Rosa, Sacramento, San Diego and Los Angeles.

Brown’s combination with Meyers Nave is not the first midsize merger of the summer. In July, 50-lawyer Dowling Aaron announced its plans to merge with Fennemore Craig, a Mountain West firm with about 130 lawyers.

*Senior reporter **Brenda Sapino Jeffreys** covers the business of law in Texas. Contact her at bjeffreys@alm.com On Twitter: [@BrendaSJeffreys](https://twitter.com/BrendaSJeffreys)*