

Former Dechert Litigation Head Joins JAMS In San Francisco

By James Mills

Law360 (February 27, 2025, 9:49 AM EST) -- The alternative dispute resolution service JAMS is expanding its mediation team, announcing Wednesday it has added a retired Dechert LLP head of litigation as a neutral in San Francisco.

Matthew Larrabee, who retired from Dechert at the end of 2023, joined JAMS as a mediator and arbitrator. He worked 44 years as an attorney, the last 15 of those with Dechert, where he served five years as head of the firm's global litigation practice. Before Dechert, he spent 28 years with the now defunct Heller Ehrman LLP, where he was firm chairman for three years and head of litigation for six years. .



Matthew Larrabee

Larrabee will be based in the JAMS resolution center in San Francisco, but will also be available for online sessions.

In a Wednesday interview, Larrabee told Law360 Pulse that after retiring from Dechert he moved to Sonoma County, California, to be closer to his grandchildren. But after getting settled and recharging his batteries, he found he wasn't ready to stop working completely.

"Toward the end of the year [2024], I realized if I was going to take on the next chapter as a mediator/arbitrator, it was sort of now or never in my mind," Larrabee said. "JAMS was a pretty obvious choice for me. I was lucky that they welcomed me on board."

He's especially happy with JAMS because it offers a large ADR platform.

"I was in San Francisco for a long time litigating. I was in New York for more than a decade. I had a fair amount of my practice in the Delaware courts," Larrabee said. "I wanted the strongest national platform and I think JAMS offers that, the most highly developed national platform for complex litigation."

He also has several law school classmates and other friends who are now at JAMS, all of whom were "very enthusiastic and encouraging for me to join the club, so to speak."

Larrabee is open to mediating or arbitrating whatever cases come his way, but his background is in commercial litigation.

"I did a lot of work in the asset management, financial services industry," he said. "I did a lot of work on corporate governance, securities litigation and M&A litigation. I did a fair amount of antitrust work. And

then commercial disputes in general, whether it's breach of contract or false claims litigation. So, I can handle any number of cases."

JAMS was founded in 1979 as Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services. It now has 29 locations and a roster of about 450 mediators.

"Mr. Larrabee's distinguished legal career is highlighted by the respect he has garnered across the profession, even from those who may be on the opposing side of a dispute," Kimberly Taylor, JAMS CEO and president, said in a statement. "His calm demeanor allows him to work through complex problems and identify solutions that provide the most benefit to everyone. We look forward to seeing all that he accomplishes as a JAMS neutral."

Larrabee was born in Palo Alto, California, and earned his law degree in 1980 at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, now known as University of California College of the Law, San Francisco.

He joined Heller Ehrman in San Francisco shortly after law school and made partner in 1987. He served as managing partner of the San Francisco office for two years, then became the chair of the global litigation practice for six years. In 2005, he became the firm chairman, staying in that position until the firm was dissolved during the financial crisis of 2008.

Larrabee then moved to Dechert, working in the San Francisco and New York offices. During his time there, he served as chair of the firm's global litigation practice, co-chair of its global asset management litigation practice and deputy chair of firmwide strategic growth.

JAMS tends to attract more retired judges, but it does have a good share of retired attorneys. While he did take a special mediator/arbitrator training course through Pepperdine University Caruso School of Law, Larrabee said that after 44 years as a litigator, he's developed a good sense of cases.

"I've always been focused on dispute resolution. Yeah, I've tried a lot of cases, but one of the things about trying a lot of cases is it makes you a lot better at settling cases and figuring out when you should settle," Larrabee said. "In my practice, I had hundreds of millions and billions of dollars. Eighty-five or 90% of those cases settle. You end up spending a large amount of time in a mediation or negotiation. Developing that skill set is important for your practice as a lawyer, not just as a mediator."

He's glad he gets to keep using his skills, knowledge and experience while slowing down some, too.

"Having a role where I can help people get something resolved," he said, "feels right to me at this point in my life and this point in my career."

--Editing by Robert Rudinger.