

Reed Smith tax lawyer leaves to start boutique

By Joshua Sebold

Former Reed Smith LLP tax litigator Marty Dakessian announced Wednesday he has spun off his practice from Reed Smith to launch a boutique.

Joined by a pair of attorneys who worked at Deloitte LLP and ADP LLC's tax services branch, respectively, Dakessian will focus on California tax disputes.

The litigator represented Space Exploration Technologies Corp., or SpaceX, before the Los Angeles County Assessment Appeals Board and earned a favorable ruling on the question of whether the company's rockets were subject to property tax.

He also convinced the 2nd District Court of Appeal to strike down an element of California's tax statutes regarding deferment of capital gains in 2014. The court ruled that only offering such deferment to shareholders of companies that house 80 percent of their business in the state was discriminatory.

Dakessian said over time he realized that representing taxpayers in state tax disputes was the part of his practice about which he was most passionate.

His interest increased when he worked as a graduate assistant for one state Board of Equalization member and later served as legal counsel for another.

"I got to see what California's tax system was like, how tough it was for taxpayers and how much representation can make a difference."

He added that while he enjoyed his time at Reed Smith and never considered moving to another firm, the boutique life was what called to him.

Dakessian said focusing on tax disputes means he's almost always facing a government agency and therefore doesn't have to worry about conflicts at all anymore.

He left Reed Smith in late January and brought aboard LaShelle Wilson, who was a director at ADP tax services, and Ruben Sislyan, a senior associate at Deloitte.

Dakessian said he had worked with both attorneys previously. He said Wilson was co-counsel on two major cases with him.

"We had big wins at state board of equalization with respect to enterprise zone credit disputes," he said. "One was representing dress maker Jessica McClintock and the other was for DeVry University."

"We wish Marty all the best with his new firm," wrote John Iino, managing partner of Reed Smith's Los Angeles office, in an email.

