

Recently we [noted](#) with some sadness that the venerable Government Contract practice at the firm of McKenna, Long and Aldridge had been more than decimated by the loss of some 20 Washington, D.C., attorneys, who moved *en masse* to Covington & Burling. It's reasonable to ask why we took the time to write about the exodus. After all, who really cares about which attorneys are at which firms—besides other Big Law attorneys, that is.

The thing is, those Big Law attorneys represent a tremendous amount of knowledge, experience, and smarts. The Big Law Government Contract practices contain a wealth of tips and advice for those who know how to mine for it. We subscribe to a number of newsletters, client advisories and press services from various law firms, the better to get the inside scoop on what various legal decisions, regulatory revisions, and upcoming legislation are likely to mean and how they might impact government compliance postures. We use that information to inform our consulting practice and our blog articles (always giving appropriate attribution and credit). Thus, we care about the health of the Big Law Government Contract practices, and you should care as well.

The practitioners at MLA have had a huge impact on the current state of government contract compliance. For years, they have partnered with the Public Contracting Institute to produce informative monthly webinars on topics of interest to the government contract compliance community. MLA attorneys have been a mainstay of the seminal Federal Publications Seminars courses for many years. In fact, three of the eleven attorneys scheduled to speak at Fed Pubs' 2015 West Coast Year in Review Conference are listed as being from MLA. In addition, MLA took the lead in addressing issues associated with the DFARS Business Systems Administration and oversight regime, going so far as to [publish](#) a guidebook on the topic.

So when we say that MLA's Government Contract practice is dispersing to other firms, it's kind of a big deal.

In our original article on the departure of MLA's Washington, D.C., attorneys, we wrote—

That's not to say the remaining MLA government contract attorneys (which include, e.g., the illustrious Tom Lemmer in Denver and James Gallagher in Los Angeles) won't carry on the

proud tradition; but we suspect it won't be the same.

Well, we may have spoken a bit prematurely.

On May 11, 2015, the law firm of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman [announced](#) that 13 MLA attorneys were joining its firm. Among those 13 former MLA attorneys were four government contract attorneys—including James Gallagher, Michael Rizzo, Kevin Slattum, and Todd Canni. The Pillsburylaw press release stated—

The four government contracts partners all have deep experience in government contracts, including bid protests, disputes, litigation and compliance. They constituted a substantial part of McKenna's large national Government Contracts practice, which was *Chambers USA* Tier 1 ranked.

'The addition of Jay, Mike, Kevin and Todd represents a strong opportunity for us to significantly grow both our firm-wide government contracts group and our current offerings in Los Angeles and California,' said Nancy A. Fischer, leader of Pillsbury's public practices and public policy sections. 'It will make Pillsbury one of the few law firms in the country with a Government Contracts practice on both coasts, and will expand our ability to serve West Coast clients.'

Now, we don't want to say that MLA is out of the government contract picture. Far from it: there are still some 50 attorneys listed on the MLA/Dentons website as being part of its government contract practice. Indeed, the MLA Denver government contract practice appears to be completely intact as this article is being written. So don't count MLA out of the fight.

On the other hand, two law firms now have significant government contract weight and heft, and can go toe-to-toe with any other firm in the public contract law arena. It will be interesting to see how they develop their newly enhanced practices going forward.