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LITIGATION

Former US attorney to headline Browne George Ross' SF office

Joseph Russoniello will work with Pinnacle Law Group attorneys

By Joshua Sebold
Daily Journal Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Los Angeles litigation firm Browne George Ross LLP will open a new office in San Francisco July 1 featuring former U.S. attorney Joseph P. Russoniello, along with Andrew A. August and Kevin F. Rooney of the soon-to-be-dissolved Pinnacle Law Group LLP in San Francisco.

Russoniello led the U.S. attorney's office for the Northern District of California from 1982 to 1990, serving under presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. He later served under George W. Bush from 2007 to 2010.

August, who was a co-founder of Pinnacle, said the firm had a great run but Theodore F. Bayer, another founder, was retiring to focus on his property tax consulting business. The remaining lawyers decided to specialize, with Matthew J. Shier and Jeremy W. Katz forming a bankruptcy boutique and August and Rooney taking their complex business litigation practice to Browne George. The firm will officially dissolve at the end of this month.

August will handle day-to-day operations at the Browne George office and Russoniello will work there three days per week.

The opening is Browne George's first outside of Los Angeles.

Russoniello and August both said they didn't know each other personally before and that their



Associated Press

Joseph P. Russoniello, a former U.S. attorney for the Northern District, will help open a Browne George Ross LLP office in San Francisco.

friendship with name partner Eric M. George was the key factor in bringing their practices together under one roof.

August met George as an adversary in what August described as a "hotly contested case" that went to trial in federal district court in Los Angeles. He said the breach of contract case, which he lost to George, bred mutual respect and admiration. *Wilshire Associates Incorporated v. Ashland Partners & Co LLP*, 08-3008 (C.D. Cal., filed May 7, 2008).

Russoniello said he met George in the 1980s when he was a U.S. attorney and George was counsel for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee.

The partners in the San Francisco office are also bound together by their emphasis on white-collar crime and complex corporate litigation. Russoniello worked as a consultant with AU Optonics Corp. in a criminal case in which

the company, its subsidiary and three of its executives were found guilty of fixing prices in the LCD panel market. He has since represented some employees of the company in civil cases.

August said he has represented the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Office Depot Inc. and the Port of Oakland.

Rooney said he achieved a settlement in a major student loan debt forgiveness case involving a helicopter training school that he argued was a Ponzi scheme. *Holman v. Student Loan Xpress Inc.*, 08-00305 (M.D. Fla., filed Feb. 13, 2008).

Los Angeles legal recruiter Lyndon Parker said Browne George is an excellent boutique.

"I don't know if there's a strategic plan for growth," he said. "This is a bunch of friends saying, 'Let's work together.'"

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