

Greenberg, Gross to Look Both Ways on Trial Work

LAW: Partners see opportunity to go on “offense” for plaintiffs

■ By JANE YU

Former federal prosecutor and current Orange County Bar Association President **Wayne Gross** has partnered with **Alan Greenberg** to start a new law firm in Costa Mesa, with plans to specialize in litigation on “high-stakes commercial cases” for plaintiffs and defendants.

The two recently left the Irvine office of Miami-based **Greenberg Traurig LLP**, where they were shareholders. Greenberg is unrelated to that firm’s founding partner.

Greenberg Traurig’s office here employs about 40 of the firm’s 1,780 lawyers, who are spread over offices in the U.S. and abroad.

Gross said his new firm, which has taken the name **Greenberg Gross**, will allow the partners to “take the business litigation cases that we want to handle without being subject to big-firm conflict restrictions.”

The idea to start their own firm

tracks a few years back, when Gross and Greenberg worked together on a case representing real estate developer **Newport Capital Advisors LLC** in Newport Beach against Connecticut-based money manager **Commonfund Realty Investors LLC**.

They won a \$50.3 million verdict on a counterclaim that argued Commonfund Realty had breached a joint venture agreement, which involved the redevelopment of the Hollywood Palladium.

“That trial, as well as the result, caused a paradigm shift in the way Alan and I perceive our role in the justice system,” Gross said. “Due to conflicts, big-firm lawyers are often limited to defending large clients who have been sued and thus can only play defense, not offense. But in the NCA case, we were able to play offense by filing a cross-complaint against a large entity that fortunately had never been represented by [Greenberg Traurig].”

Greenberg Gross has taken 7,000 square feet of office space on the 17th floor of the Center Plaza building next to the Segerstrom Center for the Arts.

Construction to renovate a former **Deutsche Bank** private wealth management office is expected to



Greenberg: co-chaired Greenberg Traurig’s OC litigation practice with Gross

wrap up by July. In the meantime, the duo will work out of a smaller office on the same floor, which they share with one other tenant, **Henry Segerstrom**, managing partner of **C.J. Segerstrom & Sons**, which runs

South Coast Plaza.

The floor also had been home to Greenberg Traurig before its relocation to Irvine a few years ago.

Greenberg had been with Greenberg Traurig since 2007. He was named a shareholder in 2010, and served as co-chair of the firm’s litigation group alongside Gross.

Gross joined Greenberg Traurig’s litigation group in 2009 as the firm was pushing to build its corporate regulation practice and white-collar criminal defense work.

Gross had previously led the white-collar division at the Costa Mesa office of Phoenix-based **Snell & Wilmer LLP**. He spent 18 years as a federal prosecutor in various posts, including chief of the Orange County division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office. ■



Gross: free of “bigfirm conflict restrictions”