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Philly-Based Weber Gallagher Expands Into Fla.

By **James Boyle**

Law360 (February 8, 2024, 3:59 PM EST) -- Midsized firm Weber Gallagher Simpson Stapleton Fires & Newby LLP continues to expand its reach across the U.S. with the recent opening of its first office in Florida and the addition of two attorneys formerly with Fowler White Burnett PA.

Weber Gallagher has launched a new location in Coral Gables, Florida, led by partner Michael Garcia and associate Antonio Villa de Rey, the firm announced Wednesday. Andrew Indeck, chair of Weber Gallagher, told Law360 Pulse in an interview Thursday that client demand for an on-the-ground presence in Florida drove the firm's growth in the Southeast.

"A number of our clients have a lot of substantial business in Florida," Indeck said. "They expressed a need for service there, and we couldn't get it done until we found the right outlet. We now have the right person to start in that location."

Indeck said Weber Gallagher had been working with Garcia to open the Coral Gables office for nearly a year as both parties worked to ensure the firm's culture would be properly sustained. With the addition of Garcia and Villa de Rey, Weber Gallagher can now strongly serve clients in the retail, transportation, hospitality and maritime industries.

"This is a great start for the office," Indeck said. "We are already in discussion with other groups that can serve other practices, such as insurance coverage, cybersecurity and workers' compensation. These are areas not handled by Mike and Antonio which our clients need in Florida."

Garcia's practice advises clients on litigation in state and federal courts, with a focus on premises liability and personal injury matters in the restaurant and retail space. His work also handles matters involving franchise agreements, as well as general liability, professional negligence and wrongful death claims.

Garcia earned his law degree from Tulane University Law School in 1996 and started practicing with Fowler White in March 1999.

"I am honored to join Weber Gallagher as a partner and lead the charge in establishing this new office in South Florida," Garcia said in a statement. "I am confident that this transition is right for my team and my clients, and I look forward to delivering quality service and achieving the best outcomes for our clients on this elevated platform. I am grateful for the opportunity to play this pivotal role in advancing the continued success and growth of this well-established firm."

Villa de Rey's practice also handles matters involving premises liability, personal injury and general liability, and has an additional focus on the maritime industry. He earned his law degree from St. Thomas University in 2019 and joined Fowler White in June 2021.

The Coral Gables office is Weber Gallagher's 11th location and its second addition in two years. In May, the firm expanded to the Midwest with the opening of its Chicago office. Indeck said that launch took two years to complete, another sign of the firm's deliberate and careful growth strategy.

"We are working with a double-edged sword," Indeck said. "We want to grow quickly to accommodate our clients, but we are also sensitive to our firm culture."

As a midsized firm, Weber Gallagher has to remain competitive with larger firms for talent by strategically adding to its resources, Indeck said. There have been discussions with other, smaller firms about joining their efforts in the coming weeks and months, he said.

"It's a repeated story I hear by speaking with the firms," Indeck said. "They can't afford to pay what the bigger firms are paying, and they can't maintain the capital and resources to compete for new clients and serve their current ones. We are uniquely positioned as a midsized firm that can absorb a smaller firm without swallowing them up or dissolving our culture."

--Editing by Abbie Sarfo.

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