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LAW FIRM BUSINESS

Bully Hunters

David Ring and John Taylor of six-attorney Taylor & Ring in Los Angeles will fight any injustice, be it sexual assault or sexual harassment, wrongful death or wrongful termination, a product defect or negligence.

By Alexandra Schwappach
Daily Journal Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — David M. Ring and John C. Taylor don't like bullies.

That has been the cornerstone of their practice since the duo formed personal injury firm Taylor & Ring on a handshake one weekend in 2002. Whether it's handling a sexual abuse case stemming back 30 years, a products liability issue involving a piece of failed rehab equipment, or a dispute between the city and a wrongfully terminated garbage man, the firm's attorneys are always ready to stick up for the underdog.

"We each brought over a mix of cases to the new firm," Ring said. "It set the tone for our firm because we can handle any type of case out there that falls under the personal injury umbrella."

Ring, who previously worked at the personal injury firm McNicholas & McNicholas LLP, represents victims of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, assault, molestation and sexual misconduct in cases against schools, churches, youth organizations and other entities. Many of his more heart-wrenching cases have struck a chord with the general public.

"We've built up a good thing here," he said. "We are lucky in that a lot of our cases have been high profile, which keeps things vibrant and alive and interesting."

In a lawsuit against the Riverside Unified School District the firm says it plans to file this month, Ring represents Jamie Carrillo, a woman in her late 20s who says she was sexually abused by her middle school teacher in the 1990s. Jamie confronted the teacher over the phone about the incident and was able to record the teacher admitting to the allegations, Ring said. Though the teacher was fired after Jamie sent the evidence to the school, Ring says, the recording received widespread media attention.

"The recording was so powerful and real," he said. "You can tell how it had affected her for her whole life."

A lawyer for the school district couldn't be reached for comment.

Earlier this year, Ring secured a \$14 million settlement in a sexual abuse case against Moraga School District on behalf of two adult females who said



Alex Drecun / Special to the Daily Journal

David M. Ring, left, and John C. Taylor formed personal injury firm Taylor & Ring in 2002.

they were molested by their male middle school teacher in the 1990s. Each victim obtained \$7 million, the largest amount per victim ever paid by any school district in any state, Ring said. *Doe 1 and Doe 2 v. Moraga School District*, C13-00152 (Contra Costa Super. Ct., filed Jan. 29, 2013).

The firm handles a wide variety of cases, which often result in seven-figure verdicts, said Taylor, formerly of personal injury firm Greene Broillet & Wheeler LLP. Taylor focuses on cases that involve serious personal injury, wrongful death, products liability, civil rights, employees' rights, insurance bad faith, faulty road design and general negligence.

Last year Taylor obtained a \$8.75 million verdict in a wrongful death case in which an unarmed 29-year-old man was shot and killed by Los Angeles County sheriffs. Several local media outlets, including the Los Angeles Times, covered the trial and outcome. *Montalvo v. Los Angeles Sheriff's Department*, TC023708 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed April 25, 2013).

Taylor also won a \$5.4 million verdict in a sexual assault case in which a 37-year-old woman was sexually battered and raped in a West Hollywood nightclub by a staff member, and he is about to try a case over a piece of rehabilitation equipment that seriously injured a small girl who was using it.

Though their cases are often headline

grabbers, the firm likes to stick to lean and mean staffing. Taylor & Ring only has six attorneys and hasn't increased that number in several years. All six have a say in every case the firm takes on and frequently take risks on what they see as "righteous" issues.

"We try to always reach a consensus on the cases we want to be involved in," Ring said. "We will often take cases that other lawyers have turned down because we really believe in the issue."

Such cases are often brought by clients who cannot afford legal assistance, so the firm takes them on pro bono.

"We don't take a case because we are going to make money off of it," Ring said. "We take them on because there's been an injustice and we want to help them out."

In one ongoing pro bono case, Taylor represents his former garbage man, who had been laid off after more than 30 years on the job for what Taylor & Ring said were not fireable offenses. Taylor spearheaded a letter-writing campaign in which community members wrote to the city council explaining how much the garbage man meant to them. After a year and a half of resistance, Taylor & Ring finally filed a lawsuit against their client's employer in January. *Santillan v. USA Waste of CA*, CV14-00335 (C.D. Calif., filed Jan. 15, 2014).

"People asked us why we didn't sue the employer right away," Taylor said. "We said it's because anyone can sue.

He just wants his job back, and that's what we're trying to help accomplish."

Besides fighting injustices, the most fun part of the practice is going to trial, Taylor said, which happens frequently now.

"More cases are not being resolved by insurance companies so they are going to trial," Taylor said. "We are more than happy about that because we love being in trial."

But a shoestring court budget and increasingly clogged courtrooms present a challenge for Taylor & Ring and other firms like it. The ever-growing backlog of cases in the L.A. courts has pushed some of the firm's cases out two or three years, the partners said.

"They say that justice delayed is justice denied," Taylor said. "That is so true for our clients."

Partners at the firm are involved in various political arenas that bring attention to roadblocks presented by the Legislature, Ring said, including being active members in the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles. Ring is slated to be president of the organization in 2016.

"The Legislature always tries to enact laws that favor insurance companies, corporations, or other public entities," he said. "That's always been something that attorneys in our practice are aware of and we are doing everything we can to educate the public."

The firm actively supports Proposition 46, the Medical Malpractice Lawsuits Cap and Drug Testing of Doctors Initiative, which will be on the Nov. 4 ballot. Among other things, the statute seeks to increase the state's cap on non-economic damages that can be assessed in medical negligence lawsuits to more than \$1 million from the current cap of \$250,000. It would also require drug and alcohol testing of doctors.

"Being involved in these things is like putting our work where our mouth is," Taylor said. "Because nothing will change with us just sitting in our office."

As for the future of the firm, Taylor and Ring agree: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

"I think we'll be in the same place we are now, staying pretty much the same size, and trying the same types of cases," Ring said. "I don't see much changing."