

**New Release**

**For Immediate Release**

### **First Quarter Law Firm Mergers Focused on Smaller Combinations**

**WASHINGTON, D.C., April 1, 2021** – It was a quieter first quarter for law firm mergers versus last year's pre-pandemic numbers, and the focus continues to be on smaller combinations, according to the merger research team at Fairfax Associates.

In the first quarter of 2021, we tracked 18 completed mergers (meaning the effective date of the merger occurred during Q1 2021). This is a decline from 21 mergers in Q1 2020, which is also the historical first quarter average when compared to our data over the last 10 years (from 2011 to 2020).

Sixty-one percent of the mergers in the first quarter of 2021 involved at least one firm with between five and 20 lawyers. This is similar to the first quarter of 2020, when sixty-two percent of the mergers involved at least one firm between five and 20 lawyers.

The largest merger effective in the first quarter was between Dentons and Des Moines-based Davis Brown (78 lawyers), a merger announced in the fourth quarter of 2020 and part of Dentons Golden Spike strategy. The next largest merger was the combination of Cincinnati firm Dinsmore & Shohl (656 lawyers) and Indianapolis-based Wooden McLaughlin (47 lawyers). Also of note was the multi-firm combination to form plaintiff litigation firm Milberg Coleman Bryson Phillips Grossman under the Milberg brand. The combination involved Sanders Phillips Grossman of Garden City, New York (40 lawyers), Milberg Phillips Grossman of New York City (20 lawyers), Whitfield Bryson of Raleigh, North Carolina (15 lawyers), and Greg Coleman Law of Knoxville, Tennessee (12 lawyers).

There were 3 cross-border combinations effective this quarter, the same number as the first quarter of 2020. St. Louis-based Armstrong Teasdale (310 lawyers), merged with London-based Kerman & Co. (32 lawyers). Dentons finalized its merger with East Africa Law Chambers of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (18 lawyers), and Littler finalized its merger with Abdon Pedrajas in Madrid, Spain (39 lawyers).

Domestically, this quarter's mergers were geographically dispersed. There were two mergers apiece in both California (one in San Francisco and one in Los Angeles) and Illinois (one in Chicago and one in Decatur). Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin each had one merger.

Looking forward, the first two mergers of the second quarter have already been announced. The combinations of Washington, D.C.-based Crowell & Moring (560 lawyers) with New York City firm Kibbe & Orbe (24 lawyers) and Syracuse-based Bond Schoeneck & King (229 lawyers) with New York City firm Putney Twombly Hall & Hirson (15 lawyers) are both set to become effective in April. Day Pitney (276 lawyers) has also announced a merger with Providence-based Howland Evangelista Kohlenberg (9 lawyers), effective in the third quarter.

We continue to see tremendous interest among law firms in growth, including through merger, as disruptive change within the legal industry creates ongoing pressure for firms to build greater depth and scale. That said, the pace of some merger discussions is tempered by the limitations on in-person gatherings. We anticipate an uptick in active discussions in the coming months and a return to higher levels of completed mergers by the end of 2021 or early 2022.

*Fairfax Associates collects data from published reports, press releases and direct reports from law firms. Mergers are reported where the acquired firm has five or more lawyers. Upon routine verification of the data, some historical numbers may have been updated since previously issued reports, and the number of mergers contained herein may change as additional mergers are announced.*

###

## **About Fairfax Associates**

Fairfax is a specialist firm of highly experienced consultants focused on serving clients in professional services, and in particular, law firms. Our services and areas of focus include merger strategy and search, merger integration, strategic planning, partnership issues including partner compensation, and governance and organization. We work with the largest international and national law firms and leading firms of all sizes.

## **CONTACTS**

Lisa Smith  
202.365.4180  
[lisa.smith@fairfaxassociates.com](mailto:lisa.smith@fairfaxassociates.com)

Kristin Stark  
415.215.9294  
[Kristin.stark@fairfaxassociates.com](mailto:Kristin.stark@fairfaxassociates.com)