

Orrick Opens Tech-Focused Office In SoCal's Silicon Beach

By **Melissa Daniels**

Law360, Los Angeles (March 7, 2017, 4:48 PM EST) -- Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP is sharpening its focus on its burgeoning tech practice with the formal opening of a 13-lawyer office in Santa Monica, the firm announced on Tuesday.

Led by partners Andrew Erskine and Daniel S. Kim along with senior associate Josh Pollick, the new office will place Orrick in the heart of Silicon Beach, the moniker for the western side of Los Angeles County that's become the fourth-largest venture capital market in the country.

The area is also the home base for many shapes and sizes of tech firms, including the headquarters of Snap Inc. Erskine, who has worked with tech companies since he started at Orrick in 2008, told Law360 the proximity to companies and investors will aid their relationships within the industry.

"The ability to just walk into a coffee shop underneath your office every day and run into people you know in the community, whether it's the investor that works right up the street or the founder you know who is working out of someone's incubator down the block, that happens more often than you think," he said.

The venture capital industry in Los Angeles has grown and matured substantially in recent years, he said. Firms are moving into the area, while investors looking for mid-stage and large-scale companies are paying more attention to what's happening, he said.

At the same time, Orrick's focus on the tech practice has increased, he said.

"Where we are from where we were five years ago is really remarkable," he said. "We see a lot of our clients and other folks we work with on a regular basis asking us, 'Hey, what's going on in LA? Tell us more about the LA market.'"

John Bautista, one of Orrick's leading tech company advisers who will spend part of his time in the Santa Monica office, said in a news release the market is home to some of the most dynamic companies in the media, aerospace and software development spaces.

"We are thrilled to be right in the center of this exciting and growing market, enabling us to better serve our local entrepreneur and investor clients and grow our practice," Bautista said.

Orrick already has big-name tech clients like eHarmony and Elon Musk's SpaceX. The office will focus on venture capital work, intellectual property and litigation matters.

The new office is the sixth location in California. The firm also has an office in the Bay Area and a 70-person office in Los Angeles. That office's leader, William Molinski, will also spend time in Santa Monica.

"Santa Monica is a perfect fit and complement to our Southern California strategy, which is already focused on the tech and media sectors," Molinski said in a news release. "We've seen the accelerating tech growth in Silicon Beach, and we're excited to be in the heart of it."

Partners Erskine and Kim focus on the technology companies group as well as mergers and acquisitions and private equity. Bautista is a member of the board of directors and the technology companies group, and focuses on working with emerging companies and investors.

Another member of the office will be partner Anik Guha, who has represented a wide variety of tech companies including the likes of Pinterest and Upworthy, and who will split time between San Francisco and Santa Monica.

Orrick has bolstered its tech practice in recent years, adding partners in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, Washington, D.C., Houston, London, Paris and Milan since 2015. Most recently, two tech-focused partners were added in Silicon Valley — Matteo Daste from Squire Patton Boggs LLP and Glynna Christian from Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP, following the addition of Ylan Steiner in London in January.

Orrick's last office launch was the opening of its Houston outpost in January 2016. The move into the "world's energy capital" was designed to broaden its energy and infrastructure group and house a new Latin American projects team.

--Editing by Kelly Duncan.