Hunter Biden's Lawyer Leaves Latham & Watkins to Establish New Law Firm

Christopher Clark, a former federal prosecutor, has left Latham & Watkins, one of the US's largest and highest-grossing law firms, to form a new litigation-focused firm with New York-based law firm Smith Villazor. Clark, whose clients include billionaire Mark Cuban and Elon Musk, is representing President Joe Biden's son Hunter in a US tax investigation.

The move reunites Clark with his former mentor from the US Attorney's Office in Manhattan, Patrick Smith. Clark said that he opted to leave Latham to avoid conflicts that had hampered his ability to pursue cases on behalf of his hedge fund clients and others. "We don't have that problem at Clark Smith Villazor," he added.

The new firm, Clark Smith Villazor, is expected to be an "incredibly dangerous and frightening team for people to face off against," according to Clark. He also said most clients would join him at his new firm, including hedge fund Appaloosa Management and its founder, David Tepper.

Clark will continue to lead a team of Latham lawyers representing Hunter Biden, who in December 2020 said his tax affairs were being investigated by the US Attorney's Office in Delaware. Biden said then that he handled his affairs "legally and appropriately." Clark said the US investigation is ongoing, and a Latham spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Smith Villazor was founded in 2016 by Smith and Rodney Villazor, both former partners at DLA Piper, another international law firm. The new firm's focus on litigation will complement Clark's experience in representing high-profile clients in complex cases.

Clark was among the attorneys hired by Cuban, the owner of the Dallas Mavericks basketball team after he was accused by the US Securities and Exchange Commission of trading on non-public information when he sold 600,000 shares in an internet search company and avoided a $750,000 loss. A Texas jury cleared Cuban of any wrongdoing in October 2013.

Musk hired Clark after the SEC initially charged him with securities fraud after he tweeted in 2018 that he was taking electric car maker Tesla Inc private. Musk and the SEC settled, with Musk paying a $20 million fine and stepping aside as the chairman of Tesla for three years. Clark said he is not currently representing Musk.

Clark's move to a smaller firm reflects a trend in the legal industry, where some lawyers are leaving large, international law firms to join smaller, more specialized practices. The move allows them to offer more personalized services to their clients and avoid conflicts of interest that can arise in larger firms with a broader range of clients and practices.

Overall, Clark's move to form Clark Smith Villazor is expected to create a formidable new player in the legal industry, focusing on high-stakes litigation and a roster of high-profile clients.