



The Power of the Boutique: Mukasey Frenchman & Sklaroff LLP

This spring, Marc Mukasey, former co-chair of [Greenberg Traurig's white-collar defense and investigations practice](#), along with two other former firm shareholders, announced the official launch of their new boutique law firm, Mukasey Frenchman & Sklaroff. As one would expect, given the background of the founders, the [four-lawyer firm focuses on government investigations](#), white-collar matters, complex litigation and regulatory enforcement proceedings. And the former BigLaw heavy hitters already have at least one ultra-high-profile client.

Mukasey Frenchman & Sklaroff LLP [represents](#) President Donald Trump and the Trump Organization in several matters. The firm is also involved in other high-profile white collar matters, including corporate cases involving [SEC and FINRA misconduct](#). The firm is also currently in [discussions](#) to represent individuals implicated in the [college admissions scandal](#).

While Mukasey Frenchman & Sklaroff LLP is certainly an impressive boutique, the firm's success may point toward a larger trend of boutique firms brandishing bigger guns than ever before, luring high-profile clients and attorneys alike away from traditionally sought-after BigLaw relationships.

AN AMICABLE DEPARTURE FROM BIGLAW

Mukasey left Greenberg Traurig LLP at the beginning of 2019 to launch his firm. In an [interview](#) at the time, Mukasey said leaving Greenberg had “nothing to do with anything other than my desire to start my own law firm,” citing a “[wonderful](#)” experience at Greenberg Traurig. Mukasey's partners also include Robert Frenchman, a former Greenberg partner who has worked on high-profile cases, and Jeffrey Sklaroff, also a former Greenberg [partner](#), who was previously a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. The trio, along with managing associate Kate Olivieri, [plan](#) to keep the firm lean—ideally attorney headcount would remain under 10. To this end, they plan to select only the best of the best to join them. It's an approach favored more and more by BigLaw boutique offshoots, including the McKool Smith alumni who formed [Reichman Jorgensen LLP](#) last year.

BOUTIQUE FIRMS INCREASINGLY MATCH THE STRIDES OF LARGE FIRMS—IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

Worldwide, boutique firms are [drawing business away](#) from BigLaw. As can likely be gathered by some of the big name matters now in the hands of Mukasey, boutique firms—while small—often offer a level of specialization, client service and an absence of conflicts that many large firms just can't match. According to the [Global Trends in Hiring Outside Counsel Report](#)—a report produced by the B2B and legal services marketplace Globality, Inc. and the British legal magazine [The Lawyer](#)—19% of 300 general counsel surveyed responded that they were unsatisfied with the services provided by firms with 500+ lawyers, and less than a quarter of respondents were very satisfied. The General Counsels surveyed were from large, international businesses with more than \$1 billion in annual revenues. Of course, there are plenty of corporations and international businesses that are happy with their BigLaw relationships—but it's clear that these large firms are facing more competition and scrutiny than they have in decades past.



Perhaps the increased competition has something to do with the trend of high-profile attorneys [leaving larger firms](#) to start their own boutiques. Besides Mukasey Frenchman & Sklaroff and Reichman Jorgensen, there are a plethora of other prominent examples, such as [Chicago Law Partners, LLC](#), a boutique firm formed by a handful of attorneys that left [Neal, Gerber, and Eisenberg, LLC](#) to strike out on their own. Similarly, 15 lawyers from [LeClairRyan](#) left to form [Murphy & McGonigle](#). And, when big name lawyers leave, it's not uncommon for big name clients follow.

The demand for talent also seems to underscore the competition between big and small law, with salary wars at the forefront. While BigLaw is traditionally associated with a big paycheck, boutique litigation firms are often [among the first to move](#) when it comes to [matching raises](#) and salaries offered by BigLaw. For example, commercial litigation boutique [Holwell Shuster & Goldberg, LLC](#) has [matched both](#) the bonuses and base salaries of the [Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP](#) scale. Reichman Jorgensen made the [same pledge](#) when it launched in 2018. As for Mukasey Frenchman & Sklaroff, their current staff of four means that there is room for only a few more elite lawyers—lawyers who will likely have equally enticing offers on the table from both boutiques and BigLaw firms.

ONWARD AND UPWARD

The trend of boutique firms increasing in caliber, thus giving BigLaw a run for its money (on multiple fronts), is likely not going away any time soon. Mukasey Frenchman & Sklaroff, for one, will make sure of that.

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